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Perspectives of Hispanic Men Who Overcame the Odds to Become Senior Leaders

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PERSPECTIVES OF HISPANIC MEN WHO OVERCAME THE ODDS TO BECOME SENIOR LEADERS

by

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It was C. S. Lewis who said, “You are never too old to set another goal or to dream a new dream” and it wasn’t until he was in his 50s that he penned his now famous works describing the *Chronicles of Narnia*. I reflected on Lewis’ words at great length before making the decision to enter this doctoral program. I had just completed a military career, serving 30+ years in our nation’s armed forces, and wasn’t quite sure what to do during the next chapter of my life. Since childhood, I’ve always had a passion for learning and the one constant I experienced throughout life was the power of education. Regardless of one’s culture or background, education was a great equalizer, and I personally witnessed how it opened doors for ethnic minorities such as the participants in this study, as well as for myself. So, starting with this research, for part two of my life, I humbly hope and pray that I am blessed with future opportunities to contribute to the ongoing efforts of convincing young Hispanics about the importance of education. Enlightenment through education is the first step in preparing the next generation of Hispanic leaders to compete for the top leadership positions in this country.

First of all, I want to thank God whose love and blessings make everything possible. He created a thirst for knowledge in me that will forever go unquenched. I also want to thank my parents who instilled my passion for reading and encouraged me to set my goals as high as possible. Like many of the participants in this study, my parents came to this country with nothing, but through hard work, sacrifice, and love made a better life for their children. Their example made me the person I am today. Furthermore, I could not have accomplished this goal if not for the support of my wife, children, and grandchildren. I hope someday they come to

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understand why “Dad” was always studying instead of spending more time with them, but with the completion of this degree, we can now start making up for lost time. I also hope that my example inspires and motivates my grandkids to pursue higher education. Regardless, based on their current progress, I have no doubt we have several future scholars in the family. I am so proud of each and every one of them!

Finally, I want to thank my dissertation chair, Dr. Audra Skukauskaite and committee members, Dr. Sharon Herbers and Dr. Norman St. Clair. These individuals have been part of my doctoral journey since day one. They have mentored, inspired, and pushed me to achieve goals I never thought possible. A special thanks goes to “Dr. Audra” who was instrumental in my transition from student to scholar. Her wisdom and patience allowed me to believe in myself and make this work possible. Thank you for all your guidance and support!

Esequiel (Zeke) Mora Jr.

PERSPECTIVES OF HISPANIC MEN WHO OVERCAME THE ODDS TO BECOME SENIOR LEADERS

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Driven by the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in the United States, ethnic minorities will become the new majority group in the next 30 to 40 years. Yet, despite the substantial increase of Hispanics in this country, they remain underrepresented in senior leadership positions. This dissertation explored the perspectives of Hispanic male leaders to determine how they overcame barriers to successfully reach the senior leader levels. This topic is important for two reasons: (a) as U.S. businesses expand globally, they will need diverse leaders who can understand and relate to various cultures, and (b) with the increasing purchasing power of Hispanics, businesses will need Hispanic leaders to create effective strategies to capture this emerging market.

The purpose of this qualitative interpretive study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic men who successfully reached senior leadership positions. The research protocol consisted of open-ended interviews with 10 Hispanic male leaders who were purposefully selected from 4 different sectors: corporate, federal civil service, military, and academia. The interviews were conducted in 1-hour sessions and the data was analyzed using the Development Research Sequence.

Analysis revealed 7 domains and 3 taxonomies relevant to the purpose of the study and research questions. The domains included (1) encountering structural disadvantages, (2) having role models, (3) capitalizing on opportunities, (4) being intrinsically driven, (5) knowing how to

lead, (6) understanding the importance of mentors, and (7) belonging to a network. The relationships among domains were further examined to construct the 3 taxonomies of (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships. These findings were considered through the theoretical lens of social capital, and indicated that these taxonomies contributed to the participants' ability to overcome challenges and advance in their careers. Five recommendations were proposed to increase the number of Hispanics in senior leader positions: (1) emphasize higher education, (2) establish mentorship programs, (3) instill the value of networking, (4) educate Hispanics about potential barriers, and (5) develop executive training programs.

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Chapter 1: Underrepresentation of Hispanic Male Leaders

The face of America is changing. Driven by the rapid growth of Hispanics and Asians in this country, the overall number of ethnic minorities will exceed 50% of the total U.S. population in the next 30 to 40 years (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). Despite this growth in the general ethnic minority population, a lack of ethnic diversity exists in the nation's top leadership positions. Cole (2007) noted that non-Hispanic White male executives lead a majority of America's largest organizations with few ethnic minorities in key decision-making positions. According to Flander (2008), many highly qualified ethnic minorities do not advance to high profile jobs because of numerous barriers impeding their paths to the most senior-level positions. These obstacles which range from discrimination to limited access to mentors, opportunities, and influential people have created an underrepresentation of ethnic minorities in top leadership positions in both the private and public sectors (Dean, Strachen, Cotswold, Carraher, & Cash, 2009; Flander, 2008; Thomas, 2001; U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2012; Wentling, 2000). To understand this lack of minority representation in the nation's top jobs and highlight potential leadership paths for aspiring Hispanic leaders, this study explored the perspectives of a group of Hispanic men to determine how they successfully overcame barriers to rise to senior leadership positions.

Some progress has been made within the last decade as a small percentage of ethnic minorities are beginning to reach upper-echelon jobs (Rosette, Leonardelli, & Phillips, 2008). In fact, the greatest stride for ethnic minority advancement in the history of the United States has been the election of Barack Obama to the Office of the U.S. President, the most powerful executive position in the country. Minority representation in other key leadership roles has started to grow as well; membership in the 111th congress in 2009 and 2010, included 8% African Americans, 6% Hispanics, and 1% Asians on the roles (Eagly & Chin, 2010).

In spite of the gains, the overall number of ethnic minorities reaching senior leadership in both the private and public sectors has not been representative of Obama's success. Instead, the data shows that diversity in corporate, federal, military, and academia senior leader positions have not been keeping pace with the changing characteristics of the country's demographics. For example, in 2007, the number of ethnic minority chief executive officers (CEOs) in all U.S. leadership positions consisted of 5% Hispanic, 4.3% Asian, and 3.5% African American (U.S. Department of Labor, 2012). Almost 6 years later, the 2013 figures reflect that the numbers have not improved and, in the case of Hispanics and African Americans, have decreased to 4.8% Asian, 4.3% Hispanic, and 2.9% African American (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013). According to Eagly and Chin (2010), the majority of companies in the United States are still run by non-Hispanic White males, who make up nearly 90% of all CEOs. Even though initial progress appears promising, ethnic minorities are considerably still less visible in top leadership positions when compared to the overall U.S. population of 64% non-Hispanic White, 16% Hispanic, 13% African American, 5% Asian, and 2% American Indian, Alaska Native, and Pacific Islander (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a).

In order for racial and ethnic minorities to become fully accepted into executive-level positions, the relevance of cultural diversity to corporate profitability must be proven (Flander, 2008). This validation can occur in two ways: through leadership and through consumerism. As businesses in the United States expand globally, the need for leaders who can understand and relate to various cultures is increasing because a more diverse workforce, able to communicate with different nationalities, generates more business and larger profits for organizations (Diversity in Corporate America, 2006). Furthermore, the Hispanic influence on the U.S. economy continues to grow daily and the combined Hispanic buying power is currently over

$1.3 trillion and will exceed $1.7 trillion by 2019 (Llopis, 2015; Nielsen, 2012). Therfore, more ethnic minorities in leadership roles are essential for organizations in the United States to compete in a global economy and to understand the needs of an emerging diverse consumer base.

Background of the Study

This study addresses the current trend of Hispanic population growth in the United States and the fact that a majority of the top leadership positions in business, government, the military, and academia remain predominantly male and non-Hispanic White. This section contains an overview of the population shifts within the United States that frame the proposed study. The first subsection sets forth the details of the overall demographic trends within the United States. The second subsection contains descriptions of the ethnic minority population within business, government, the military and academia. The third subsection compares minority representation across business, government, the military, and academia and discusses the implications of these changes for organizations. The section ends with an explanation for the reasons behind the selection of Hispanic men as the focal point of the research.

Overall demographic trends. Leaders who can identify with various ethnic minority groups and cultures will be needed to meet the demographic changes that will soon impact the nation's ethnic composition (Chuang, 2013; Eagly & Chin, 2010). The U.S. Census Bureau (2011c) reported that the nation's racial and ethnic mix will change noticeably in the next 30 to 40 years. Table 1 depicts U.S. population percentages broken down by race and ethnic groups from 2010, and the population percentages projected for 2050. In sum, by 2050, the total percentage of non-Hispanic Whites in the U.S. population is expected to drop from 63.7% to 47%, and the percentage of ethnic minorities is projected to increase to 53% of the overall U.S. population creating a new non-White majority for the first time in the nation's history. As a

result of these demographic trends, future generations of people in the country will experience a more pronounced multicultural United States of America.

Table 1

Comparison of Current U.S. Population by Race/Ethnicity to Year 2050 Projections

Race/Ethnic Group	% of Total Population (2010)	% of Total Population (2050 Projection)	% Change of Total Population (2010 to 2050)
Non-Hispanic Whites	63.7	47	- 16.7
Hispanics	16.3	29	+12.7
African Americans	13	13	0
Asians	5	9	+4
American Indian, Alaska Natives, and Pacific Islanders	2	2	0
Ethnic Minority Totals	36.3%	53%	

Note. Census data were obtained from the 2010 Census Brief, *The White Population: 2010* (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). The racial category of non-Hispanic Whites represents data for only Whites that reported they are not of Hispanic origin.

A closer look at the specific U.S. Hispanic population from the 2010 Census Brief reflected in Figure 1 reveals that Hispanics now number around 50 million, and make up over 16% of the total U.S. population of 308 million. During the five-year period from 2000 to 2005, the number of Hispanics increased at a rate five times greater than the growth rate of the entire U.S. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). According to Passel and Cohn (2008), by 2050, the U.S. population will grow to 438 million with the number of Hispanics increasing to 128 million, which will equate to nearly 30% of the total population at that time. This rate of growth

will rank the total U.S. Hispanic population slightly behind the entire country of Mexico's total projected population of 140 million (Passel & Cohn, 2008; United Nations Report, 2004).

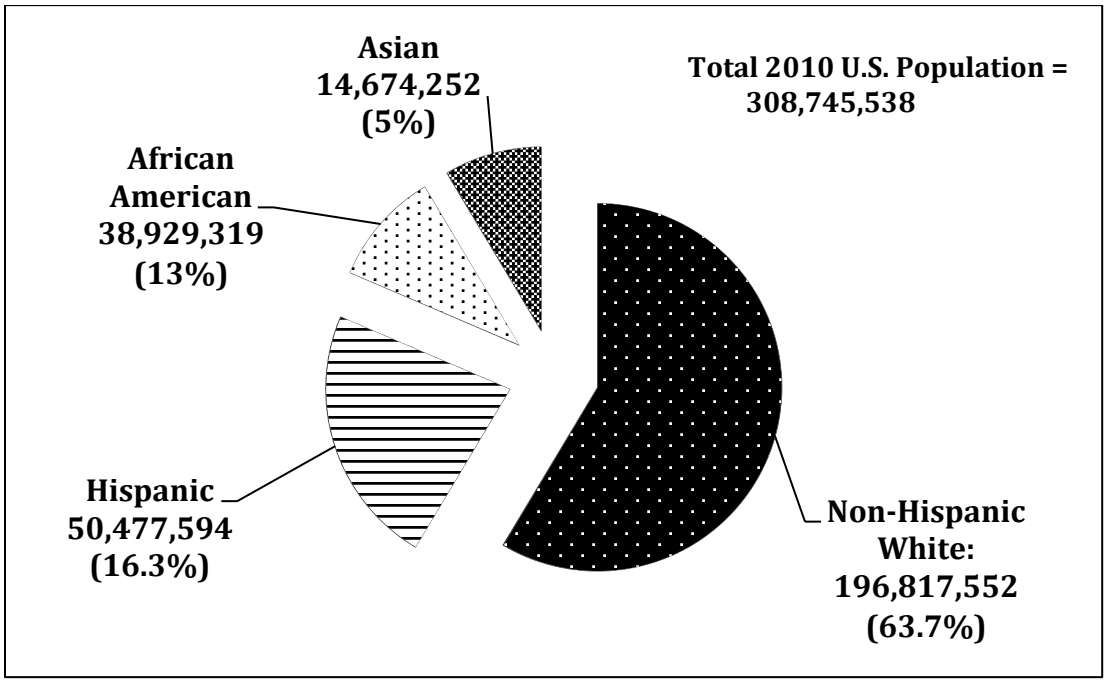

Figure 1. Total 2010 U.S. population and percentage of population by race and major ethnic group. Includes only White non-Hispanic, Hispanic, African American, and Asian so totals do not add up to the total U.S. population. Created from 2010 U.S Census Bureau data; brief numbers: C2010BR04, C2010BR05, C2010BR06, and C2010BR11.

The Hispanic growth is especially noticeable in the nation's two most populous states of California and Texas. In California, Hispanics now outnumber the non-Hispanic White population. Census population data released in July 2014 revealed California contained 15 million Hispanics compared to 14.9 million non-Hispanic Whites (Lopez, 2014; Reuters, 2015). This shift is also expected to affect politics and public policy, as the Hispanic population of California will continue to increase to almost twice that of non-Hispanic Whites in the state by 2060 (Reuters, 2015). In Texas, non-Hispanic Whites are no longer the majority group in the state and make up 44% of the population, while Hispanics and other minorities make up the remaining 56% of the total state population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). However, within a

decade, Hispanics alone will eclipse non-Hispanic Whites as the largest race or ethnic group in Texas (NPR News, 2013). According to former Texas Senator Leticia Van De Putte of San Antonio, where 63% of the residents are Hispanic, the changes in Texas are a demographic transformation, as the Hispanic population gets closer to parity with non-Hispanic Whites (Torregrosa, 2011). Van De Putte predicts that within 15 to 20 years, the remainder of Texas will reflect the racial and ethnic population of San Antonio.

Minorities in business. Even with the tremendous growth of the minority population in the United States**,** racial and ethnic minorities are still scarce among managers and executives within U.S. organizations (Kay & Gorman, 2012). In today's corporate business world, the highest-level executives are responsible for leading the development and execution of company vision, strategies, policies, goals, and objectives. These top administrators, who hold titles such as Chief Executive Officer (CEO), President, Vice-President, or Chief Operating Officer (COO), typically make the key leadership decisions within an organization. However, these types of corporate leadership opportunities for ethnic minorities are minimal because despite composing only 33% of the nation's workforce, non-Hispanic White men hold more than 75% of board seats and 95% of board chair positions in Fortune 500 companies (Lucas & Baxter, 2012). Furthermore, there are currently only 23 CEOs in Fortune 500 companies identified as ethnic minorities, which amounts to only 4.6% of the 500 available CEO positions (Zillman, 2014). Another Department of Labor Study of over 150,000 employees in 94 Fortune 1000 companies discovered minorities made up only 3% of all top leadership positions (Martin, 2006).

The Hispanic representation at senior executive levels is even lower. According to Quinones (2010), Hispanics will account for more than 60% of the U.S. population growth in the next 40 years, yet Hispanics represent only 1% of the top corporate executive positions in the

nation's largest corporations. Research by Deeran (2009) revealed that Hispanics held only 4% of executive and director jobs at Fortune 100 companies. These results determined that even though Hispanics were the fastest growing demographic group in the country, making up over 16% of the total U.S. population, they represented only 1.7% of all leadership and upper-echelon professional positions in the nation's employed civilian population (Holladay, 2005). According to the *2007 HACR Corporate Governance Study*, unless changes are made and given the current growth rate, it will take more than 100 years for Hispanics to achieve population parity in company boardrooms (Matsumoto, 2007).

For corporate America to profit from the growth of ethnic minorities in both the U.S. workforce and global marketplace, organizations will need leaders with diverse backgrounds who can lead and communicate across cultures (Flander, 2008). Waters (1992) asserted that there are advantages to diversity in leadership such as multiple perspectives in decision-making, which can produce innovative solutions. Waters also added that "long-term survivability and profitability of organizations" (p. 15) is dependent on the ability to accept the importance of diversity. Furthermore, Carver and Livers (2002) found that heterogeneous groups (a) make better decisions than homogenous ones, (b) tend to have better problem-solving skills, (c) are more creative, and (d) deal more effectively with complex challenges. Hong and Page (2004) discovered that diverse approaches to issues are usually more effective than exclusive ones because teams can approach complex problems from various perspectives and apply different tools and skills. Moreover, Stevens, Plaut, and Sanchez-Burks (2008) indicated that by building an all-inclusive, multicultural environment, organizations create a workplace in which employees feel safe to innovate because they know their unique experiences and contributions will be valued. These studies suggest that diversity in the workplace give organizations an advantage

when the need to relate to various ethnic and racial cultures or a multi-pronged approach to a problem is required.

Minorities in government. Although U.S. Office of Personnel Management (2012) data indicate the federal government is hiring a greater percentage of underrepresented minorities than the corporate sector, there is still much work to be done. Identifying the percentage of ethnic minorities in upper-level positions within federal service requires examining the Senior Executive Service grades to which the highest-level federal employees are assigned. These senior executives are the major link between political appointees and federal employees and hold the highest paid civil service positions. According to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management, about17.8% of all Senior Executive Service employees were classified as ethnic minorities with the following breakouts: (a) African American 10.4%, (b) Hispanic 4.1%, and (c) Asian/Pacific Islander 3.3% (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2013). Thus, even though the percentage of ethnic minority executives in federal service is around four times higher than the private sector, the numbers are disproportional when considering that ethnic minorities make up 34.6% of the total federal workforce (U.S. Office of Personnel Management, 2012).

Minorities in the military. The military profession also reported a low percentage of ethnic minorities within their senior leadership. According to the 2012 Demographics Report, minorities make up around 30% of the total 1.4 million military members, which includes all active service branches (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013). Within the active duty grades, 22% of all officers and 32% of enlisted are considered ethnic minorities. However, in the upper-level ranks, minorities composed only about 10% of all flag (admiral) and general officer ranks, which is equivalent to the most senior-level positions in the federal government and executive-level jobs within the private sector (U.S. Department of Defense, 2013). The military stopped tracking

officer demographics by ethnicity in 2008, but fiscal year 2008 data revealed that Hispanics accounted for only 1.7% of the top officer ranks (U.S. Department of Defense, 2009). Zweigenhaft and Dumhoff (2006) added, "there is very little chance of an increase in Hispanics at the elite level of the military in the near future" (p. 161). The numbers suggest that current decisions in promoting ethnic minorities to leadership positions in the military have not reflected the growing diverse population within the United States.

Minorities in academia. According to Haro and Laura (2003), studies done in several states with large and expanding Hispanic populations revealed that the percentage of Hispanic administrators in higher education has been increasing at two-year colleges, making small gains at four-year universities, but nearly stagnant at the most selective research universities in the country. According to Sethna (2011), the American Council on Education reported that the total number of senior leaders in public 4-year universities consisted of 82.2% non-Hispanic Whites. However, these same positions are underrepresented in all ethnic minority group categories with African Americans at 10.6%, Hispanics 5.6% and Asians 0.7%. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in the *2012 National Aggregate Report* revealed that within the United States, Hispanics held only 3% of all senior leader positions in the field of academia. These numbers suggest that similar to the three industries previously discussed, even though the total Hispanic population in the U.S. continues to rise, Hispanic representation at the top levels of the higher education field remains disproportionately low.

Comparison of minority representation across contexts. A comparison of corporate, federal government, military, and academia non-minority and ethnic minority representation in both overall employee population and senior leader levels is shown at Table 2.

Table 2

Percentage Comparison of Non-Minority and Ethnic Minority Employee Population to Non-Minority and Ethnic Minority Senior Leader Population by Sector and Overall Average

	Employees			**Senior Leaders**		
Column	**A**	**B**	**C**	**D**	**E**	**F**
Sector	Non-minority Employees	Ethnic Minority Employees	Hispanic Employees	Non-Minority Senior Leaders	Ethnic Minority Senior Leaders	Hispanic Senior Leaders
Corporate	64.8	35.2	13.4	88	12	3.7
Federal	65.9	34.1	8.1	86.7	13.3	2.8
Military	64	36	16.9	92.2	9.8	1.7
Academia	72.6	27.4	8.7	86.2	13.8	3.8
Average	66.8	33.2	11.7	88	12	3

Note. The corporate data was obtained from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission *2012 National Aggregate Report*. At the corporate level, the report combines all executives, senior level officers and leaders; therefore, the number of Hispanic senior leaders is less than the 3.7% reflected above. The federal government and military percentages were obtained from the sources referenced in the text.

The data shows that the average of the overall percentage of employees in columns (A - C) of Table 2 mirror the demographic distribution within the general United States population. However, the average percentage of ethnic minority and Hispanic senior-level leaders in columns (E – F) are vastly underrepresented in comparison to their representation in the U.S. population. Specifically, although ethnic minorities make up nearly 40% of the total population in the United States, they account for only 11.7% of senior leaders, with Hispanics representing only 3% of this total. The data indicates that Hispanics have not yet realized how to capitalize on their growing numbers.

Shifts in buying power. One way Hispanics are gaining prominence in the United States is by becoming a strong influence on the mainstream economy through their buying power (Nielsen, 2013). The change in U.S. demographics is also leading to a change in market demands, and corporations will need leaders to help access those new markets. According to Nielsen (2012), with buying power of over $1.3 trillion, Hispanics account for an important share of U.S. consumer expenditures and are quickly becoming a leading driver of economic growth in the nation. Moreover, if the U.S. Hispanic market consumer power were a stand-alone country, it would rank in the top 10 economies in the world (Llopis, 2015; Nielsen, 2012).

Although present-day Hispanic consumerism contributes significantly to the U.S. economy, future economic well-being of the country will depend on Hispanics even more due to their projected growth and earnings (Huffington Post, 2012; Nielsen, 2012). To take advantage of these growing market trends, organizations will need to hire more Hispanic leaders who (a) possess the skills and abilities to motivate a diversified workforce and (b) understand and can relate to the Hispanic culture (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Llopis, 2011; Roberson, & Park, 2004). In turn, leaders with diverse backgrounds will be able to attract a more multicultural consumer population and help the U.S. gain access to new markets.

Selection of Hispanic men as the focus of the study. Even though women and other ethnic minorities are underrepresented in top-level leadership positions, this study focused solely on the perspectives of Hispanic men. This group was selected because recent data suggests that Hispanic men are not advancing into higher education at the same levels as Hispanic females or other ethnic minority groups (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). As a result, the college degree attainment gap for Hispanic men is widening instead of closing and this decline in human capital is one of the major factors preventing them from ascending into senior leadership (Kay & Gorman, 2012;

Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). In addition, other findings reveal Hispanic women are more likely to be employed in managerial or professional occupations than Hispanic men (Mundra, Moellmer, & Lopez-Aqueres, 2003; U.S Department of Labor, 2012). The percentages in Figure 2 reflect that Hispanic men hold the fewest number of management, professional, and related positions in the country compared to any other racial, ethnic, or gender group.

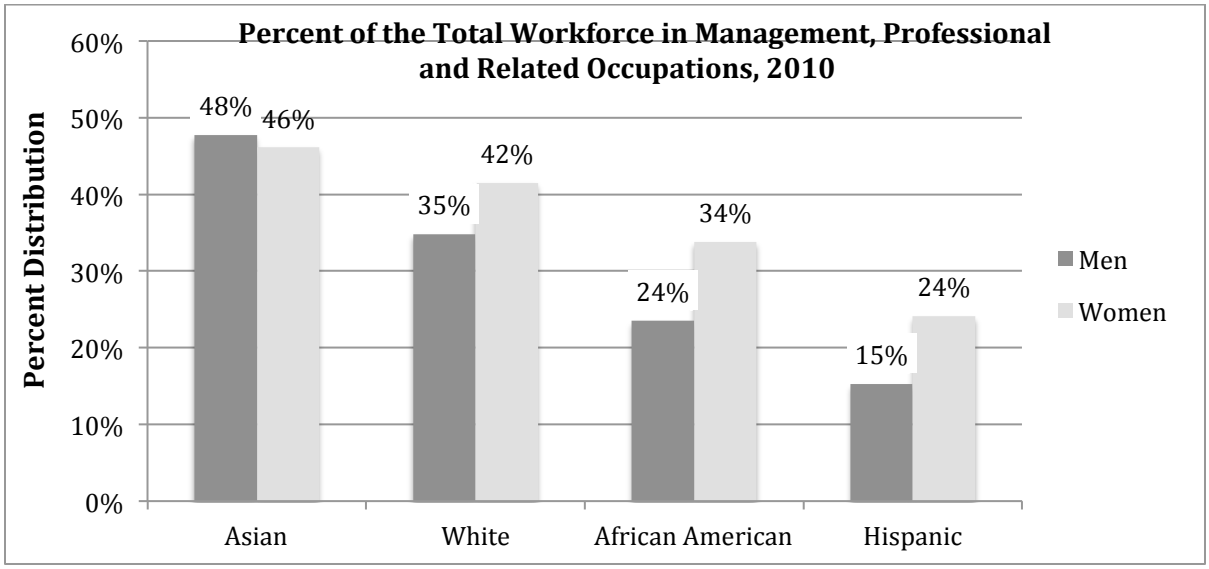

Figure 2. Percent of total workforce in management, professional, and related occupations by sex, race, and Hispanic and Latino ethnicity, 2010. Adapted from "Labor Force Characteristics by Race and Ethnicity, 2010," from the U.S. Department of Labor, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Report 1032, August 2011.

Statement of the Problem

Both the population and the workforce in the United States are becoming more ethnically diverse. However, the demographic workforce shift has been limited to entry-level jobs while middle and senior-level leadership positions have continued to reflect a paucity of racial and ethnic minorities (Martin, 2006). There are structural inequalities such as lack of mentoring, poor English skills, or discrimination that prevent minorities from reaching the top levels of leadership and many people with high leadership potential end up abandoning promising careers (Mundra et

al., 2003; Thomas, 2001). Regardless of the source of the inequity, Thomas (2001) observed that many minorities with high career aspirations and high potential for leadership eventually become frustrated and leave organizations when they find out they have little chance to compete for the higher-level positions. This attrition represents a loss of opportunity to grow the country's future talent pool, regardless of their racial or ethnic backgrounds. As U.S. demographics continue to evolve, organizations will be confronted with the task of developing and promoting a more diverse labor force into highly qualified and respected senior leaders and managers (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). However, there is hope on the horizon for aspiring ethnic minority leaders as some are starting to gain access to corporate executive positions (Flander, 2008).

The increase of racial and ethnic minorities in leadership positions across the United States has been occurring slowly as members of minority groups are starting to occupy more elite power positions in corporate, political, and military professions (Eagly & Chin, 2010; Zweigenhaft & Dumhoff, 2006). A search in the Academic Search Complete (EBSCO) database for “Hispanic leaders” after 2007 resulted in 216 scholarly articles, but did not produce studies related to the topic of Hispanic men in senior leader or manager positions. However, much has been cited in the popular media about factors contributing to the successful advancement of ethnic minorities, with hundreds of stories celebrating individual accomplishments as people rise from poverty to success.

On the other hand, little has been written about the successes and challenges Hispanic men face reaching senior-level leadership positions. Current literature reveals little research over the past 20 years on the development of ethnic minorities for leadership (Epps, 2008). The number of studies on women in leadership is substantial, but research on the leadership perspectives of ethnic minorities is minimal and focuses mostly on African American men (Chin,

2013; Okozi, Smith, Clark, & Sherman, 2009). Additional research was needed to determine how Hispanic male senior leaders successfully overcame barriers so that other aspiring Hispanic males might benefit from their perspectives. To address the gap in the research, I examined the experiences of successful Hispanic men to gain their insights and provide a point of reference for other Hispanics who wish to reach the upper-levels of corporate or public service in the United States. By understanding current senior leader perspectives, aspiring leaders may avoid some of the difficulties the study participants faced during their struggles to become senior leaders.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic men who successfully reached senior leadership positions. Through this research, I aimed to acquire a deeper understanding of participant views about their experiences by having them describe how they overcame challenges to rise to the senior leader levels in their professions. The perspectives of Hispanic men who achieved senior leader status in their respective fields are valuable to future generations of Hispanics who have ambitions to advance into higher-level leadership positions. By studying the experiences of successful Hispanics, I sought to provide aspiring Hispanic leaders with information to help them develop a path towards senior leadership. Organizations could also use this research to provide better career development and support to future Hispanic leaders. The insights I develop from this study will help contribute to a better understanding of the lack of representation of Hispanic men in senior leader positions in the United States.

Research Questions

This qualitative study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions?
2. How did the participants successfully overcome barriers?

Theoretical Framework

Mundra et al. (2003) and McGuire (2000) contend that a reason Hispanics struggle to reach executive levels is the lack of social capital or social connections to networks at the upper levels of organizations. Social capital, as conceptualized by Bourdieu (1986), builds on the concept of capital as ownership of a tangible or intangible object. Bourdieu identified economic, cultural, and social capital as factors that influence an individual's ability to improve his or her position within society, as well as providing a means for dominant classes to extend and reinforce their power and privileges over other social domains (Goldthorpe, 2007). Capital, in its various forms, can be saved, spent, and used to improve an individual's status in life (Block, Hirt, & Danielsen, 2014). Economic capital is typically thought of as money, cultural capital is the ideas and knowledge people draw upon to determine what a particular social class values, and social capital is "a process by which social actors create and mobilize their network connections within and between organizations to gain access to other social actors' resources" (Knoke, 1999, p. 18).

Bourdieu further described social capital as membership in a group that provides its members support through a shared network and access to capital collectively owned by the group (Bourdieu, 1986). Similarly, Coleman (1988) defined social capital as the resources accumulated by a community through trust and shared values that are available to individuals within that social structure and develops from norms, social networks, and interpersonal relationships. Therefore, social capital is constructed as communities develop trust among their members and expectations of reciprocal social relations are created. In turn, reciprocity and associations strengthen and produce more trust (Stolle & Hooghe, 2003).

Social capital is an important aspect of career success and ethnic minorities need access to it in order to reach the senior leadership levels (Singh, 2007). People with access to social capital are able to find better jobs more quickly, are more likely to be promoted early, and receive higher performance evaluations (Krebs, 2008). In fact, social ties to non-Hispanic Whites are considered a form of social capital for ethnic and racial minorities (Santoro, Velez, & Keogh, 2012). These contacts can provide minorities with information on job opportunities as well as advice and mentorship. On the other hand, lack of access to social networks that could be used to further careers may prevent individuals from gaining access to higher levels of leadership (McGuire, 2000).

Thomas and Gabarro (1999) point out that racial and ethnic minorities may not know people in positions of leadership who can act as mentors and provide the introductions necessary for entry into places where leadership is developed. For Hispanics, the availability of mentors and even differences with Hispanics concerning country of origin and country of birth, are preventing them from forming their own professional networks (Knouse, 1992). Second, the unspoken rules of social networks implemented and enforced by dominant groups may bar access to shared contacts, thus deciding who will be allowed to participate (Portes, 1998). If members of ethnic minority groups are able to enter the leadership ranks, the groups in power may resent or resist the change to the established hierarchy (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Third, once minorities make it to top leadership positions, they must continue to build relationships to gain more support and better communication channels, which takes valuable time (Singh, 2007). As more Hispanics ascend to leadership positions, the need for social connections to further their professional goals will become greater. Social Capital Theory provides insight into how the

participants in this study were able to gain access to the forms of professional networks that enabled them to reach senior leadership positions.

Significance of the Study

Within the next 30 to 40 years, ethnic minorities will become the major population group in the United States, with Hispanics leading the growth (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). The changing composition of the U.S. population needs to coincide with an increase of minorities at the top leadership levels to accurately reflect the ethnic makeup of the shifting U.S. workforce because ethnic minority leaders can communicate more effectively with members of their own cultures (Jelinek, 2011; Selvam, 2013; Vissa & Sundar, 2012). Furthermore, the change in demographics is leading to an increase in U.S. Hispanic consumer market demands; therefore, developing leaders that are representative of the national population will help gain access to these new markets and position the U.S. to compete more effectively in a global economy (Llopis, 2011, 2013; Marquis, Lim, Scott, Harrell, Kavanagh, 2008; Roberson, & Park, 2004).

This research will also help current and aspiring Hispanic male leaders identify specific skills, abilities, and qualifications they must develop, and challenges they may encounter to compete for senior-leader positions. The main intent of the proposed study was to capture information that Hispanic men can use to guide their path to senior leadership. Participant insights about past experiences have the potential to teach future leaders how to avoid situations that may hinder progress towards reaching senior-level positions. In addition, the results of this study will be used to develop recommendations in organizational policies and programs to help address the issue of underrepresentation of Hispanic males in senior-level leadership positions.

Overview of the Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic men who successfully reached senior leadership positions. I conducted this study using a qualitative interpretive methodology. This design was selected because the research focused on exploring and interpreting the meaning of participant experiences from their individual point of view. In particular, I sought to examine Hispanic male senior leader perspectives about the lack of ethnic minority representation in senior leadership positions as described in their own words during face-to-face, semi-structured interviews.

A purposeful sampling approach was used to identify 10 participants who fit the following criteria: (a) Hispanic male, (b) currently or formerly assigned to a senior leadership position, (c) educated in post secondary schools in the United States, and (d) employed primarily in the United States. I selected the individuals from four different industries: (1) corporate business, (2) federal civil service, (3) military service, and (4) academia. This approach allowed for cross-case analyses among four diverse professions. To identify participants for study, I contacted university faculty, doctoral program peers, gatekeepers, and personal associates. Since the required number of participants could not be obtained from these sources, a snowball sampling technique was also used to identify additional study participants. Snowball sampling is a form of purposeful sampling that allowed me to make contact with the professional and social networks of participants and identify other potential candidates for the study (Mack, Woodsong, MacQueen, Guest, & Namey, 2005). This was a necessary step since the category of Hispanic male senior leaders was not easily accessible through other sampling strategies.

The participant pool was further narrowed to only men with Mexican American heritage. Individuals of Mexican American heritage were targeted because Mexican Americans represent

the fastest growing portion of the Hispanic population in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). Although the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities other than Hispanics in top leadership positions remains a significant problem, the important issues of gender and non-Hispanic ethnic minority representation were beyond the scope of this particular study. Every effort was made to ensure the study adhered to the fundamental ethics principles of respect for persons, beneficence, and justice (Mack et al., 2005). The application of ethical principles during the research is discussed in more detail in Chapter 3: Methodology.

In-depth, one-on-one interviews were used to collect data during this study. The participants' personal histories, perspectives, and experiences were explored to describe the challenges they had to overcome to reach senior leader positions. As described by Brenner (2006), I used open-ended interviews to gather information about the participants "to find out how they made meaning in their lives, experiences, and processes" (p. 357). I conducted face-to-face interviews, using open-ended interview questions, and performed the interviews at locations most convenient to the participants. Even though a semi-structured interview format was used, I remained open to the depth and breadth of the interview responses, which helped when the participants chose to discuss topics outside the range of the interview questions. I documented the interviews through the use of audio recordings and field notes.

Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) was used for data collection and analysis within this qualitative study. Although DRS has been developed for ethnographic studies, adapting the methodology to this study provided beneficial results because of its emphasis on the emic or insider perspective which "directs the researcher to pay close attention to the participants' understanding of the meaning of their experiences" (D'Alonzo, 2012, p. 126). DRS also incorporated an ethnographic interview style, which had similar features to a friendly

conversation. Ethnographically guided interviews and questions helped establish rapport and prevented an overly formal atmosphere, which could have resulted in withdrawn cooperation (Spradley, 1980). Lastly, according to Lee, Nargund-Joshi, and Dennis (2010), DRS was specifically developed to "articulate cultural semantic knowledge shared by a community of participants" (p. 43). The participants in the study all shared a common cultural knowledge as Hispanic senior leaders. Therefore, using DRS to analyze their perspectives allowed me to shift the cultural category focus from a community to an individual perspective with minimal researcher influence.

Several methods were used to evaluate this study to ensure quality in the qualitative research (Hammersley, 2007; Merriam & Associates, 2002). First, to coincide with Hammersley's discussion on quality work, the practice of full transparency was followed to allow anyone, from novice to expert, the opportunity to judge the quality of the research. Second, strategies such as member checks, reflexivity, and audit trails were implemented because they provided safeguards to ensure validity and reliability (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Third, trustworthiness in the data was established through the use of the tools previously mentioned; transparency, reflexivity and audit trails, as well as other methods such as acknowledging researcher biases and the use of rich, thick descriptions. These procedures ensured rigor and helped comply with ethical guidelines.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of the research was that it was conducted in a single metropolitan area in the southwestern United States where the majority of the population is of Hispanic descent. Because this location is comprised of a high concentration of Hispanic leaders in political, economic, and social positions, participant experiences may differ from Hispanics who live in

other areas of the country that are more predominantly non-Hispanic. However, detailed description of the contexts of the participants' perspectives will mitigate this limitation and enable potential transferability. Finally, because of the small number of participants and the uncertainty of the participants' backgrounds resulting from the snowball sampling approach, some of the individuals did not fit the original criteria. For example, one participant was born in Mexico, but relocated to the U.S. to complete both his graduate and doctoral degrees and eventually settled in this country. Another person was not a current senior leader at the time of the interview, but held that position in the past. Care was taken to recognize these situations and ensure the participants fit the standards that supported the purpose and intent of this study.

Definition of Terms

One of the main drivers for this research was the concept of barriers and how they impact the lives of ethnic minorities. For example, over the course of this study, I referred to the various barriers the participants in this study encountered in order to reach senior leader level status. In this section, I explained my use of the term barriers. I also used the words *Hispanic, Latino, senior leaders* and *top-level leaders* interchangeably even though there are distinctions in the formal meaning of the words; therefore, I included definitions to clarify the context of my use of these words. However, for consistency, throughout the majority of the study, I preferred the use of *Hispanic* and *senior leaders* even though the literature frequently included the terms *Latinos* and *executive*, *higher-level*, or *upper-level leaders and managers*.

Barriers. According to Eagly and Chin (2010), Maume (2012), and Wentling (2000), barriers can include external actions that are imposed on an individual by others such as discrimination, stereotyping, and limited access to opportunities. Other external barriers include structural disadvantages resulting from racial biases that are built into the structures of

organizations, institutions, governments, or social networks. Sullivan and Artiles (2011) assert that these inequities can be explained by the structural inequality theory, which is defined as a condition where one category of people is attributed an unequal status in relation to other categories of people. Similar to social capital theory, structural inequality theory creates preferred favor and privilege for one group over another which "provides advantages for some members and marginalizes or produces disadvantages for other members" (Belshaw, 2011, p. 1).

Kay & Gorman (2012) and Mundra et al. (2003) also identified barriers that are internal and arise from an individual's upbringing or decision-making. These internal sources can be language, educational choices, poor career planning, or inadequate skill preparation. Regardless of the source, external and internal barriers prevent highly qualified ethnic minorities from advancing into top leadership positions. The participants in this study were able to identify specific occurrences that hindered their progression towards career goals and employment opportunities. These disadvantages included growing up in low socioeconomic and Spanish speaking environments, exposure to discrimination, and inequitable treatment creating lack of opportunities. During the remainder of this study, when discussing various forms of barriers, I referred to both external and internal factors that limited or prevented ethnic minorities from reaching their full potential.

Hispanic vs. Latino. For census purposes, the U.S. Government defines Hispanics and Latinos synonymously as people of "Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011b, p. 2). However, according to Beam (2009) the term *Hispanic* is an English word that originally referred to people from Spain and later expanded to include the populations in South and Central America that speak Spanish. On the other hand, Alcoff (2005) defines *Latino* as a Spanish word

that refers to people with roots in Latin America, which is made up of many regions in the Western Hemisphere to include Mexico and other countries in Central America, the Caribbean, and South America. Latin Americans are distinguished by their diversity and their native tongue may be Spanish, Portuguese, and/or French depending on whether the country was colonized by Spain, Portugal, or France (Beam, 2009). A 2013 survey of over 5,000 Latino adults conducted by the Pew Research Center revealed 50% of people polled have no preference for either term. However, those who do express an affinity for one name over the other prefer *Hispanic* to *Latino* by a ratio of 2:1 (Lopez, 2013).

Senior leadership. I used the term *senior leader* extensively throughout the study. It was applied synonymously with *executive-level leader, higher-level leader, upper-level leader*, and *top-level leaders*. Senior leaders have the authority to establish operational plans and goals as well as make decisions that affect their assigned areas of responsibility (Nahavandi, 2012). For this study, I was able to gain access to top-level leaders. Therefore, for the purpose of this dissertation, the position of senior leader was defined as an individual assigned to the higher levels of leadership who has the day-to-day responsibility for managing a group, department, or organization. Thus, the definition of a senior leader in this study is broad and may include any of the following positions: (a) executive officer in a private or non-profit corporation, (b) federal government civil service grade of GS-14 and higher, (c) O-6 level (captain in the Navy and Coast Guard and colonel in the Army, Air Force, and Marines) and above in any branch of the United States military, or (d) president, vice-president, or dean of a college or university.

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the problem addressed by the dissertation stemming from the projected change in the demographics of the United States over the next 30 to 40 years. The most

significant shift will be in the decrease in the percentage of non-Hispanic Whites in the population and the corresponding growth of the percentage of Hispanics and other ethnic minorities. Estimates indicate that by 2050, non-Hispanic Whites will be in the minority and Hispanics will constitute the largest ethnic group in the United States. However, despite the change in the general population, the make-up of the top leadership positions in business, government, military, and academia remains predominantly male and non-Hispanic White. This disproportionality in senior leader roles has implications for the economic well-being of organizations as well as for the upward mobility of Hispanics. Although existing literature has provided narrative on how minorities overall have succeeded, a preponderance of the material is focused on women and African American men. More research was needed on the perspectives of senior leaders from other ethnic groups such as Hispanics to determine how they were able to successfully reach senior leadership positions.

This study was intended to address the gap in the research of the perspectives of Hispanic men who became senior leaders. During the interviews, I asked participants to share stories of their successes. The insights I developed from the analysis of these narratives could be used to guide Hispanic men who have goals of someday reaching senior leadership positions, as well as provide organizations with information useful for developing policies and programs designed to support leadership development among minorities.

The study was guided by the theoretical framework of social capital (Bourdieu, 1986), which posits that upward mobility within a capitalist society is supported or limited by access to social networks. Therefore, I looked for possible connections between the representation of Hispanics in senior leadership and their ability to create social capital, social connections, and networks at the top levels of organizations. Social capital is an important aspect of career

development and success and all groups, regardless of race or cultural background, need access to it to reach the senior levels of leadership. It is essential that Hispanics create professional networks because studies show that people with access to social capital are more likely to be promoted and receive higher performance evaluations (Krebs, 2008, Singh, 2007).

Chapter 2: Review of Literature consists of examination of literature pertaining to the issue of minority underrepresentation in leadership positions, focusing on five categories: (a) the extent of minority representation in senior leader positions, (b) types of barriers minority leaders encounter, (c) ways minority leaders overcome barriers, (d) skills, abilities, and qualifications important to minority leader achievement, and (e) role of social capital in the career progression of minorities. The literature revealed that Hispanics face a number of challenges to high-level leadership positions, from discrimination to lack of mentors, opportunities, and qualifications; yet, there are some who have still achieved success despite those challenges. What research did not explain was how successful Hispanic leaders overcame external and internal factors to become senior leaders and what those experiences were like.

Chapter 3: Methodology describes the study design in detail. The research protocol consisted of face-to-face interviews with 10 Hispanic men who were current or former senior-level leaders. I purposefully selected the participants from four diverse professions in a major metropolitan area in the southwestern United States. I protected the participants through strict adherence to the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board and the use of confidentiality, protection of data, and proper disposition of records. The interviews were recorded with a target timeframe of 60 minutes per interview session, consisted of open-ended questions, and included follow-up and probing questions as necessary. I analyzed the data using Spradley's (1979) Development Research Sequence (DRS) and performed five levels of

analysis: (a) analyzing participant responses, (b) transcribing as analysis, (c) identifying key ideas, (d) domain analysis, and (e) taxonomic analysis. I maintained trustworthiness of the research data by applying Guba's (1981) four principles for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability.

Chapter 4: Findings reveals the results of the data analysis. The use of DRS as an analysis tool provided me a systematic method to construct meaning from the participants' interviews. I applied DRS to the interview transcripts and used the participants' words to identify semantic relationships, included terms, domains, and taxonomies. As a result, I identified seven domains relevant to the purpose of the study and research questions: (1) *encountering structural disadvantages*, (2) *having role models*, (3) *capitalizing on opportunities*, (4) *being intrinsically driven*, (5) *knowing how to lead*, (6) *understanding the importance of mentors*, and (7) *belonging to a network*. I then examined the relationships among the domains, which resulted in the creation of three taxonomies: (a) *becoming competitive*, (b) *becoming a leader*, and (c) *developing professional relationships*. The three taxonomies provided key insights into the participants' experiences and captured their perspectives of how they overcame barriers to reach senior-level leadership positions.

Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions synthesize the findings, answers the research questions, and provides both organizational and future study recommendations. The findings indicated that the three taxonomies of (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships contributed to the participants' ability to overcome challenges and advance in their careers. Five recommendations were proposed to increase the number of Hispanics in senior leader positions: (1) emphasize higher education, (2) establish mentorship programs, (3) instill the value of networking,

(4) educate Hispanics about potential barriers, and (5) develop executive training programs. The research reveals that Hispanics are capable of reaching senior leadership, but as the literature reflects, their numbers are underrepresented. For the U.S. to remain competitive in a global economy, more Hispanic leaders will be needed to help businesses, the federal government, military, and academia understand and relate to diverse cultures and create effective strategies to appeal to emerging and developing markets.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

As the U.S. economy continues to globalize, organizations need leaders who can lead and communicate across cultures (Flander, 2008). However, Mundra et al. (2003) contended that Hispanics and other ethnic minorities remain underrepresented at senior leadership positions and other professional jobs in the United States. According to Eagly and Chin (2010), even though non-Hispanic White men continue to monopolize most leadership positions, the number of racial and ethnic minorities in senior leadership has been steadily increasing. Some progress has been made, yet minorities are still "less visible in top leadership positions than would be expected on the basis of population base rates" (Rosette et al., 2008, p. 758). Given the continued paucity of minorities in leadership positions, this dissertation explores Hispanic male leader perspectives of how they were able to successfully overcome barriers to become senior leaders.

The literature I selected for this research addressed the themes of diversity, race, ethnicity, leadership, mentorship, and ethnic minority underrepresentation. I reviewed scholarship from areas of leadership, organizational development, social capital, and qualitative research, as well as research from the fields of education, social science, and cultural studies, where appropriate. During the search, I included the following terms: "leadership," "management," "minority representation in executive and senior-level positions," "race," "diversity," "ethnicity," "barriers," "Latino," "Hispanic," and "color." I used the terms in isolation, and in combination, to filter the relevant data available on a wide-range of academic databases. I also accessed a variety of databases to identify information across disciplines relevant to the topic. These databases included: "ABI Inform Complete," "Academic Search Complete," "eBooks on EBSCOhost," "ERIC," "Google Scholar," "JSTOR," "Military and Government Collection," "PrimoSearch," "ProQuest," "Sage Research Methods," and

"Worldcat." I ensured identical query terms were used for all the databases. These searches generated 743 hits from these references, I determined 213 articles were relevant to my research.

Through the review of the literature, I sought to determine the extent of diversity at the top leadership levels and the proportion of ethnic minority representation in senior leader positions. Also, in an effort to better understand the challenges participants had to face to obtain senior leadership positions, I examined the types of barriers ethnic minorities have encountered during their careers. Accordingly, I focused a portion of the literature review on strategies minority leaders have implemented to overcome the difficulties that restricted their access to upper-level leadership jobs. Furthermore, because the participants in the study were able to reach senior-level leader status, it was necessary to gain background on the types of essential skills, abilities, and qualifications that contributed to the success of ethnic minority senior leaders.

To fully understand the problem of how barriers prevented ethnic minorities from reaching senior leadership positions, I considered theories related to inclusion and exclusion of group membership. Therefore, I searched for a theoretical framework that helped explain the actions and behaviors that allowed certain individuals preferred entry into privileged groups. As a result, social capital theory was selected because it provided a structure for understanding how professional and social networks exclude members, who are not part of their groups, from gaining access to shared resources such as jobs or other forms of capital collectively owned by groups (Tzanakis, 2013).

Thus, the review of literature explored five broad research areas to provide a better understanding of the circumstances that enabled a group of Hispanic males to overcome structural inequities and other barriers to reach senior leader status in their respective organizations. The five subject areas selected for the literature review were (a) the extent of

minority representation in senior leader positions, (b) the types of barriers minority leaders encounter, (c) the ways minority leaders overcome barriers, (d) the skills, abilities, and qualifications important to minority leader achievement, and (e) the role of social capital in the career progression of minorities.

The Extent of Minority Representation in Senior Leader Positions

Research has revealed that the percentages of Hispanics in senior leadership positions typically have been low, comprising approximately 4% of corporate board chair positions in Fortune 500 companies and 3.5% of senior federal government positions (Alliance for Board Diversity, 2012; Starks, 2009). In the military, during the fiscal year 2009 and 2010 promotion boards, over 90% of the individuals selected to the top rank of general were non-Hispanic White; only 4% were African American, 3% Hispanic, and 1% Asian (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2011). These statistics are inconsistent with the fact that ethnic minorities, led by Hispanics and Asians, are the fastest growing population group in the country and will total nearly 40% of the overall population in the next 30 years (Deeran, 2009). Furthermore, the total number of ethnic minorities participating in the work force continues to rise. In 2000, they accounted for approximately 28% of the nation's workforce, but by 2050 that number will increase to nearly 50% (Toossi, 2002). However, the overall proportion of Hispanics in management, professional, and related occupation remains at 8.4%, compared to 82.1% of non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Department of Labor, 2013).

In another U.S. Department of Labor study (2011a), data were collected from approximately 150,000 employees in 94 Fortune 1000 companies. In these samples, Martin (2006) discovered 15% of the employees and 6% of the supervisors were ethnic minorities. However, at the executive level, minorities made up only 2.6% of all positions. Most of the

companies in the study had implemented programs to develop potential leaders; however, the companies did not formally document the number of minorities included in these programs. As a result of the survey, the Department of Labor conducted follow-up audits on nine of the larger corporations and discovered each company had upper-level positions within their organizations that few ethnic minorities ever reached (Martin, 2006). These companies had to be reminded of the legitimate obligation to ensure equal access and participation to all qualified individuals, regardless of ethnic or racial background. The literature suggests that some reasons minorities struggled to reach the top levels of organizations were (a) limited career progression opportunities, (b) ineffective diversity programs, and (c) perceptions of unequal treatment such as racial biases and discrimination.

Limited career progression opportunities. Traditionally, a large percentage of ethnic minorities are locked into low wage, low prestige, and dead-end jobs with little chance of job progression (Powell & Cook, 2008). A 2005 study by the Pew Hispanic Center revealed that Hispanics were concentrated in non-professional service occupations such as construction, maintenance, and food service which ranked low in earnings, educational requirements, and overall socioeconomic status (Newlink Group, 2011). Dobbin, Kalev and Kelly (2007) conducted surveys of 829 companies with at least 100 workers and discovered that 56% of managers were non-Hispanic White men and 30% were non-Hispanic White women. The remaining 14% was split among ethnic minorities with African American men, African American women, and Hispanic men at 3% each; Asian men at 2%; and Hispanic and Asian women sharing the remaining 3%.

Ineffective diversity programs. Diversity programs have long been in place in many organizations, but many are not effective because as Monaghan (2010) points out, “leaders need

to do more than support diversity initiatives; leaders need to model the very behavior they espouse" (p. 60). Furthermore, senior leaders have not supported diversity efforts because the focus has been too much on awareness programs and policy changes rather than how diversity can help profitability (Nahavandi, 2012). Until this issue is resolved, Maume (2012) asserts that non-Hispanic White male executives will continue to promote individuals who share their similar backgrounds and worldviews. This data suggests that if organizations want to provide leadership opportunities for ethnic minorities, management must make diversity programs a top priority.

Perceptions of unequal treatment. Perceptions that inequities are preventing ethnic minorities from breaking into the top leadership levels also exist. According to Gerson (2007) the release of the 2007 diversity management report, *Career Advancement in Corporate America: A Focus on Visible Minorities – Survey Findings* revealed results of 17,000 non-Hispanic White and ethnic minority employee interviews working in 43 companies and found that only 38% of the minorities polled have faith in their organizations to promote employees fairly, compared to over 46% of the non-Hispanic White employees who believe promotions are equitable. Although the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employment discrimination, Laer and Janssens (2011) claim the battle against discrimination is far from over; it has only become more subtle. Hewlett, Jackson, Cose, and Emerson (2012) reported that 40% of African Americans, 16% of Hispanics, and 13% of Asians have experienced discrimination in the workplace. In addition, a study by Rosette et al. (2008) discovered a consistent bias against ethnic minorities, as non-Hispanic White individuals were perceived as more effective leaders and more likely to succeed than minorities. According to Eagly and Chin (2010), prejudice today is more covert, or in some cases even unintentional, as demonstrated by groups in power who subconsciously stereotype ethnic minorities as lacking the essential leadership attributes needed to run large

organizations. Peppas (2006) asserted that prejudice against minorities continues to be the single most important structural disadvantage preventing their advancement into the executive ranks.

Cost of discriminatory practices. Discriminatory treatment regarding leadership roles has begun to impact organizations financially as workplace discrimination lawsuits are resulting in substantial litigation settlements (Deitch & Hegewisch, 2013). Texaco and Coca-Cola, two of the largest corporations in the United States, were imposed fines and served with racial discrimination lawsuits. The courts ruled that Texaco and Coca Cola's organizational cultures allowed managers to openly discriminate against ethnic minorities, costing them each nearly $200 million in litigation settlements (James & Wooten, 2006). Similarly, a company executive filed a $450 million lawsuit in 2005, against General Electric for underpaying African American managers, denying them promotions into senior positions, and retaliating when they raised objections (Armour, 2005). The case was settled in January 2006 for undisclosed terms (POGO.org, 2006). More recently, Merrill Lynch, a Fortune 100 company and leading provider of global corporate and investment banking services, agreed to settle a $160 million racial discrimination class-action lawsuit filed in 2005 for allegedly creating an atmosphere that prevented the success of ethnic minority financial advisors (Dubois, 2013). These examples show that even the largest organizations are not immune to legal disputes and must pay attention to their human resource practices. Rather than fight the demographic changes occurring in the United States, companies must create a workplace culture that embraces diversity, which Llopis (2011) asserts is key to building a successful business in today's global market environment.

Types of Barriers Minority Leaders Encounter

Ethnic minorities face a wide-range of obstacles during their struggle to become senior leaders. Studies by the Newlink Group (2011) and De Los Jovenes, Griffith, Prezas, &

Labercane (2006) attributed low minority promotions to internal sources such as lack of qualifications, education, and skills. On the other hand, Maume (2012) and Eagly and Chin (2010) claimed that external sources, such as discrimination and lack of opportunities, were major causes that prevented minority advancement into higher-level jobs. Other forms of external barriers encountered by ethnic minorities emanated from structural disadvantages. Sullivan and Artiles (2011) claimed these structural inequities resulted from racial biases that are built into the core of institutions and organizations. In Simmel's seminal (1950) study of structural inequality, he asserted that some groups experienced inequities because of their position in the social structure. The participants in this study described barriers that were indicative of this type of structural disadvantage. For example, the participants in this study were aware that because of their heritage and the socioeconomic status of the predominantly Hispanic areas they grew up in, they had less access to quality education, and were at a disadvantage when they needed to compete against non-Hispanic White peers who came from better school systems. Although ethnic minorities face many challenges during their rise to upper-level leadership positions, I focused this study only on factors commonly identified in the research as major barriers to ethnic minority success: (a) discrimination, (b) limited access to mentors, (c) limited opportunities, (d) insufficient qualifications, and (e) culture conflicts.

Discrimination. According to Nahavandi (2012) and Peppas (2006), discrimination occurs partly when a majority group believes minorities are less suited for management than non-minorities, or when deficiencies are presumed to exist based on negative stereotypes. Maume (2012) found that ethnic minorities face discriminatory practices such as wage inequalities and less challenging job assignments and are also are more vulnerable to layoffs than their non-Hispanic White counterparts. In many cases, minority executives are assigned to

administrative or support roles rather than to high profile assignments or developmental opportunities (Thomas & Gabarro, 1999). As a result, they do not gain the experience needed to advance their careers. Even when promoted, ethnic minorities are placed in "racialized" jobs in charge of minority issues; non-Hispanic Whites, however, obtain more visible jobs such as sales, operations, marketing, and finance (Maume, 2012; Thomas, 2001). Furthermore, according to a study by Carver and Livers (2002), ethnic and racial minority executives feel they are scrutinized more closely than Whites in areas such as behavior, dress, and appearance which creates stress and builds resentment to the point that many minorities leave to look for jobs where they can be accepted more as full team members. Although hiring discrimination is against the law, a study by Eagly and Chin (2010) revealed that it continues to be practiced unintentionally. An example they cited is when non-Hispanic White leaders subconsciously believe they are acting in an unbiased manner in choosing non-Hispanic Whites for leadership positions, even though equally or more qualified ethnic minorities may be available.

During their study, Rosette et al. (2008) found that inadvertent discrimination and biases that cause this type of behavior resulted from generalizations about certain groups that conflict with the characteristics the majority group believes are required for successful leadership. In a study of large U.S. law firms, Kay and Gorman (2012) found that non-Hispanic Whites and ethnic minorities may possess equivalent job-related skills, but "conscious or unconscious cognitive biases" lead employers to assess ethnic minorities less favorably than non-Hispanic Whites (p. 93). Biases against minorities influence organizational leaders to perceive non-Hispanic White employees as having greater leadership potential, which results in more training, mentoring, and challenging assignments for them (Kay & Gorman, 2012). Rosette et al. (2008) also looked at racial biases in leadership categorization and found that non-Hispanic White males

were more often perceived as leaders than ethnic minorities. Minorities may begin to believe and accept these negative stereotypes to the point where they place limitations on themselves and turn down future advancement opportunities for fear they will not succeed (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Similarly, Thomas and Gabarro (1999) claimed that a "widely shared set of unchallenged biases" (p. 241) exists in many corporations, setting expectations for minority advancement so low that few even make it to middle management. Thus, whether discrimination is explicit or unintentional, it creates disadvantages for ethnic minorities and hinders their efforts to reach senior-level leadership positions.

Limited access to mentors. According to Singh (2007), ethnic minorities struggle to reach the senior leader levels because they lack access to role models to teach them the skills needed for career progression. Maume (2012) proposed that minorities lack a connection to individuals who hold authority and decision-making power in organizations. These claims are evidenced by Mundra's et al. (2003) study revealing that only 27% of Hispanic males had access to formal mentors in their current organizations. Payne-Pikus, Hagan, and Nelson (2010) found that subtle discrimination, restricting access to mentors in America's largest law firms, is leading to high rates of ethnic minority departures from these organizations and larger corporate America. Carver and Livers (2002) discovered that mentoring is extremely important for minorities, but they claim people choose to mentor those who look like them, making it difficult for ethnic minorities to find mentors with influence in the organization. Mundra et al. also asserted that lack of mentoring programs and networking prevent minorities from gaining access to the top organizational leaders who can provide important career advice, as well as professional and social network introductions. Without support from mentors, ethnic minorities do not have

access to people who can teach them who or what they need to know to move up the career ladder (Dobbin & Kelly, 2007).

Furthermore, Kay and Gorman (2012) claim that even if minorities establish cross-race mentoring relationships, they receive less guidance and support than individuals in same-race relationships. Cross-race mentor relationships also take more time to develop, have greater difficulties establishing trust, and provide less psychological, social, and emotional support than same race mentoring relationships (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Other challenges Thomas (2001) identified in his study of minority advancement and cross-race mentoring relationships:

- mentor and protégé may have a tough time identifying with each other because of cultural differences;
- people may question the mentor's ulterior motive for mentoring a minority or whether the protégé is selling out his culture;
- cross-race relationships are rare; therefore, under more scrutiny, which discourages participation; and
- protégé's peers can become jealous and resentful, which may prevent an individual from forming a close relationship with a prospective mentor (pp. 7-10).

Thomas also discovered that minorities progressed further in their careers when their non-minority mentors understood and acknowledged race as a potential barrier. These open discussions of racial issues between mentors and mentees allowed the mentors to teach protégés how to approach and overcome obstacles more effectively (Thomas, 2001).

Limited opportunities. According to a Newlink Group study (2011), companies in the U.S. provide very few opportunities for ethnic minorities to move into higher-level leadership positions. Thomas (2001), asserted that one of the problems limiting leadership opportunities for minorities is that non-minority professionals are put on a fast career track early in their careers based solely on potential, but minority professionals must first prove themselves. Because

organizational leaders perceive non-Hispanic White employees as having greater potential, they disproportionately select them for informal training, mentoring, and career development assignments (Kay & Gorman, 2012). As a result, non-Hispanic Whites are likely to gain greater skills, further solidifying the impression that they are more competent and better suited for top leadership jobs. This process explains why non-Hispanic White leaders are preferred over racial and ethnic minority leaders (Rosette et al., 2008). Morrison and Von Glinow (1990) found that minority leaders fall behind their non-Hispanic White counterparts in terms of knowledge and skill development because of limited opportunities to take challenging assignments. The evidence suggests that lack of opportunities for ethnic minorities prevent them from gaining access to the training and work experience they need to develop the skills needed to qualify for higher-level leadership jobs.

In the military, over 60% of all senior-level officers come from the highly visible tactical and operational missions, which are defined as infantry, pilots, and surface warfare positions; however, 75% of these officers are non-Hispanic White males (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2011). Opportunities for ethnic minorities in these fields are limited because of the following impediments: (a) minority men are more likely to pursue a field that is more transferrable to the civilian sector, (b) minority communities and families do not have sufficient knowledge about the tactical and operational fields to influence their youth, (c) minority perception that people in these specialties hold racist attitudes, and (d) ethnic minorities may not identify with certain career fields because they contain very few successful minority role models (Military Leadership Diversity Commission, 2011). These findings reveal that like the business sector, limited access to influential mentors and limited training and job opportunities are

preventing ethnic minorities from developing the skills and experiences needed to move into the senior military leader ranks.

Insufficient qualifications. Many ethnic minorities lack the qualifications needed for senior leadership due to deficiencies in education, language proficiency, work experience, and training created by earlier educational, cultural, and social disadvantages (Kay & Gorman, 2012; Mundra et al., 2003). These limitations have resulted in minorities entering organizations with lower levels of education. For example, in 2012, only 65% of Hispanic adults had a high school education, compared to 92% of non-Hispanic Whites, and 86% of African Americans (Kay & Gorman, 2012; Pew Research Center, 2013). Only 16% of Hispanics 25-years and older are college graduates, compared to 24% of African Americans and 35% of non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011b). Hispanics earned only 7% of the nearly 612,000 master's degrees awarded during the academic years 2009-2010, while non-Hispanic Whites received 73% of the total during that same period (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). In their study of underrepresentation in managerial and professional occupations, Mundra et al. (2003) determined that "education is arguably the most critical factor explaining access to managerial and professional occupations" (p. 522). This data suggests that besides skills and opportunities, attainment of higher education is also essential for Hispanics to improve qualifications needed to compete for senior leader jobs.

Language also has been a significant factor for business success in the United States. Individuals who lack English language skills will not move up the management ladder (Mundra et al., 2003). Research by the Newlink Group (2011) into the "biggest obstacle to Hispanic professional advancement" revealed that the 2010 U.S. Census reported only 63% of all Hispanics were proficient in English, thus creating a barrier to higher-level jobs (pp. 8-9).

Furthermore, a 2015 study found that overall, Latino immigrant English language skills were the poorest among all immigrant groups, with roughly 40% of immigrant adults lacking basic English literacy and 48% lacked basic numeracy ("Does Immigrant Skills," 2015). It's not just a problem for new immigrants either, a study by Davila and Mora (2000) revealed that only 75% of Hispanics who came to this country 25 years ago reported that they spoke English "well."

Without English language proficiency, individuals have little access to higher-level jobs in the U.S. and in many instances, a language deficit resulted in lower wages (Mundra et al., 2003). Hispanics, themselves, are aware of the problem. A survey of 1,220 Hispanic adults conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center in 2011, revealed that 87% of Hispanics surveyed said Hispanic immigrants need to learn English, and 89% said they cannot succeed in the U.S. by speaking only Spanish (Taylor, Lopez, Martinez, & Velasco, 2012). However, there is no single panacea to the problem. For younger Hispanics at least, teaching language skills to immigrants in public schools is one solution, but opposition to bilingual education discourages this course of action and has been banned in Arizona, California, and Massachusetts (Armario, 2013; Peppas, 2006). Armario added that the longer it takes for students to learn English, the further behind they fall in other subjects, further exacerbating the education gap between Hispanics and their non-Hispanic White peers. The data suggests that until language deficiencies are resolved, Hispanics as a group will continue to face barriers to professional advancement.

Culture conflicts. According to Mundra et al. (2003), the lack of ethnic minority representation in professional and managerial occupations may be explained by political, cultural, and historical differences between non-Hispanic Whites and Hispanics. For instance, in the workplace, Hispanics appeared to attach greater significance to subjective traits such as respect, loyalty to family, friends, and organizations, and cooperative group cohesiveness, while

non-Hispanic Whites more strongly weighed objectively assessed traits such as age, mannerisms, marital status, and having school age children (Peppas, 2006). In a study of culture among Hispanic managers in an Anglo business, Ferdman and Cortes (1992) claimed that these sorts of culture conflicts could be explained through Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimension theory, which is one of the most widely known approaches for analyzing differences among cultures.

Hofstede proposed that individuals vary on five value dimensions depending on their national culture: (a) individualism versus collectivism, (b) masculinity versus femininity, (c) uncertainty avoidance, (d) long-term versus short-term orientation, and (e) power distance. Individualism is a national culture characteristic that describes the degree to which people prefer to act as individuals, rather than members of a group, and collectivism describes a close social framework in which people expect others in their groups to look after and protect them. Masculinity is an attribute that describes the extent to which the culture favors traditional masculine work roles of achievement, power and control, and femininity indicates little differentiation between male and female roles in which women are treated as equals. Uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid them. Long-term versus short-term orientation measures a society's devotion to traditional values. People with long-term orientation look to the future and value thrift, persistence, and tradition, while short-term orientation people value the here and now. Finally, power distance describes the extent to which a society accepts that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 1980; Navandi, 2012). By applying Hofstede's (1980) lens to their study, Ferdman and Cortes (1992) postulated that Hispanics in the United States and other Latin American societies are more collectivist than non-Hispanic Whites. Their claim suggests that within the Hispanic community, the group is emphasized over the individual,

the need for consensus is greater, and interpersonal behavior is stressed over the standard American approach towards mission or task focus and individualistic achievement.

Hofstede's (1980) theory could help explain why Hispanics are less likely than non-Hispanic Whites to create and maintain professional networks to help them gain access to top-level jobs. Because Hispanic value systems are different than non-Hispanics, their management style and approach towards employees, may conflict with the dominant group's style and result in disagreements (Ferdman and Cortes, 1992). For example, when debating a hiring decision, this research would suggest that a Hispanic manager might push for a candidate they saw as loyal and community-oriented, while non-Hispanic White managers might be more inclined to support candidates they saw as self-motivated or representing individualistic ideals. Because of their cultural background, both sides believe their standard is the right one, and they might have trouble understanding why the other party does not seem to value their perspective.

In her study of diversity and conflict in work groups, Pelled (1996) indicated that lack of understanding between cultures in the workplace causes conflict, impairs performance, and increases employee turnover, which ultimately affects productivity. While perhaps initially a result of cultural conflicts, these clashes have also been connected to factors such as the perception of in-group partiality, competition for limited resources, and a distrust of out-groups, which may be the result of socialization or other life experiences (Sanchez-Burks, Nisbett, & Ybarra, 2000). Valladares (2003) discovered that culture clashes between the values of ethnic minority cultures and dominant groups occur as early as the beginning of Hispanics' educational experiences in U.S. classrooms. Castaneda, Bateh, and Heyliger (2013) also asserted that cultural differences create misunderstanding, conflict, and resentment between groups. This research revealed that conflicting cultures could cause ethnic minorities to become disconnected with

their organizations, which in turn, contributes to the difficulties they must overcome in order to move up the career ladder. Ethnic minorities find that majority groups do not share their sense of values, and this disjuncture encourages bias, distrust, and a systemic exclusion of minorities that inhibit their promotion opportunities.

Ways Minority Leaders Overcome Barriers

In today's multicultural society, U.S. organizations are faced with an increasingly diverse workforce and clientele. The ability to recognize the importance of diversity to achieve a common goal is essential to success, and a growing number of organizations now look for individuals who can lead and communicate across cultures (Flander, 2008; Ospina & Foldy, 2009). As corporate leaders begin to realize long-term survivability and profitability depends on the ability to understand the significance of a diverse workforce, greater numbers of ethnic minorities will have opportunities to compete for senior leader jobs (Waters, 1992). Two methods that have proven successful in helping minorities overcome barriers are corporate sponsorship and mentoring.

Many organizations are taking a proactive approach to help ethnic minorities get past barriers and succeed. Dean et al. (2009) found that businesses such as IBM have developed strategies to increase the number of minorities with succession plans, which include recruiting, developing, mentoring, and networking. By following this plan, IBM intends to create an organizational culture supportive of career development for minorities. Companies such as Pepsico, Verizon, and Xerox have some of the best diversity programs on record and a high percentage of ethnic minorities in key leadership positions (Diversity in Corporate America, 2006). Other large corporations such as Coca-Cola, SBC Communications, and Denny's have experienced equal opportunity problems in the past. However, their leaders changed the

organizational culture and created a more diverse workforce that can better relate to customers of various cultures, resulting in an increase in clients and larger profits (Diversity in Corporate America, 2006). Thus, organizations are starting to realize the benefits of a diverse workforce and are modifying human resource policies to increase the number of minorities in management.

Ethnic Minority leaders are also taking a proactive approach to advance professionally. For example, minorities can enhance their credentials to help them advance in their careers by gaining access to mentorship programs. Thomas (2001) found that those minorities who advanced the furthest shared one characteristic: a strong network of mentors and corporate sponsors who nurtured their professional careers. Thomas also asserted that formal mentoring programs are particularly beneficial to ethnic minorities because historically, minorities have difficulty gaining access to mentors. Kay and Gorman (2012) suggested that organizational mentoring programs should be purposely designed with minorities in mind, and continuously monitored to ensure that everyone, regardless of race or ethnicity, is given an equal opportunity to participate. Payne-Pikus et al. (2010) stressed that mentoring of minorities in law firms is essential and a "key way of demonstrating the firm's investment and long-term valuation" of associates (p. 560). In the education field, Zambrana et al. (2015) claimed that mentoring relationships are critical for underrepresented minority faculty to help improve retention and enhance advancement and career success. The evidence suggests that ethnic minorities need a strong support system of influential leaders, mentors, and role models to help advise them on proper career paths to reach senior leader jobs, which relates directly to the purpose of this study.

Skills, Abilities, and Qualifications Important to Minority Achievement

Human capital factors are important predictors of managerial and professional status among Hispanics. Mundra et al. (2003) discovered that fluency in English and education were

major predictors of career advancement for Hispanics, with English fluency being the single most important factor determining the likelihood of advancing to managerial or professional levels. In addition, a Newlink Group Research Study (2011) revealed Hispanics perceived language skills as the major obstacle to professional advancement. However, among the third and later generations of Hispanics born in the U.S., over 97% of them are now speaking English "pretty well" or "very well," so every generation is improving their English language abilities (Taylor et al., 2012). Increase in English language skills is a promising development because English proficiency is a critical factor predicting career success and an important human capital resource that contributes to ethnic minority leader achievement (Davila & Mora, 2000).

Education is an important part of leadership preparation. Over 90% of executives have earned a college degree, making it another key qualification that allows ethnic minorities to move past barriers and facilitate access to managerial and professional occupations (Peppas, 2006; Singh, 2007). According to research by Mundra et al. (2003), the more years of schooling an ethnic minority member completed, the higher the odds that he or she was engaged in a managerial or professional occupation. Education is also essential in today's high-technology environments, especially for the best paying jobs, but the outlook for Hispanics was not encouraging because only 13% of Hispanics have a bachelor's degree or higher (Mundra et al., 2003; Peppas, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). A survey of 1,100 Hispanic families, gathering data on how U.S. companies treat U.S. Hispanic consumers and workers, indicated that Hispanics likely to be successful (a) were aware that lack of education is an important obstacle to professional advancement, (b) had high expectations and wanted opportunities for career progression, and (c) assigned great value to the educational opportunities and company provided training offered by their organization (Newlink Group, 2011). According to a study by Grupo

Balmaseda (2014), educational attainment is a factor that leads to upward corporate mobility; thus, Hispanics must invest in education to compete for top-level leadership positions.

Another factor that contributes to ethnic minority success is their multicultural experiences (Grosjean, 2013). For example, with the experiences gained from learning to navigate between various cultures, minorities (a) can adapt to situations more easily, (b) are more open to change, (c) develop the ability to effectively shift thinking from one context to another, and (d) foster creative processes and problem solving abilities (Eagly & Chin, 2010). Singh's (2007) study of 100 Financial Times Stock Exchange corporate boards revealed that many of the companies with ethnic minority directors had higher market capitalization and were larger, more independent, and gender-diverse than the other boards. Flander (2008) also claimed that ethnic minority groups have an advantage in understanding various ethnicities as well as feeling comfortable moving from one culture to another because they have been doing it for years. Similarly, in a study of Chicana identity construction, Vera and De Los Santos (2005) discovered that biculturalism, which is the ability to switch from one culture to another, demonstrated the adaptability, flexibility, and perseverance that Hispanics had to develop to balance their ethnic identity with the majority non-Hispanic White culture. Ethnic minorities learn this biculturalism as they attempt to navigate the American White society while preserving their own unique culture (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). Hispanics and other ethnic minority groups had to learn to adapt and survive in two distinct "worlds" and this ability to switch behavior according to the cultural situation has been linked to leadership effectiveness and identified as an important leader characteristic in today's global environment (Lakshman, 2013).

Role of Social Capital in the Career Progression of Minorities

Another reason Hispanics struggle to reach senior leader positions is a lack of social capital in the form of professional and social networks at the top levels of organizations (Kay & Gorman, 2012). According to Eagly and Chin (2010), ethnic minorities were underrepresented in leadership roles because they lacked access to the influential social networks needed to build social capital. Mundra et al. (2003) asserted that social ties to top-level leaders are a necessity to get placed on the proper career path. Santoro et al. (2012) similarly suggested, "ties to dominant groups enhanced in-group identity among marginalized ethnic populations" (p.226), and having connections to high-status network members was essential for employees to gain access to power and resources in a work environment (McGuire, 2000). However, it appears that ethnic minorities, Hispanics in particular, have difficulties gaining access to professional networks. For example, during a study of Hispanic managers in Anglo businesses, Ferdman and Cortes (1992) discovered that Hispanics leaders felt they did not fit in with their non-Hispanic peers because of differing sets of values and priorities, thus preventing them access to the influential social networks they needed for career advancement. To better understand the concept of social capital, a more detailed description is provided in the remainder of this section.

The term capital can be defined in a variety of ways. One of the most common refers to financial assets or resources such as money, property, and other valuables that can be saved, spent, exchanged, or invested (Block et al., 2014). However, according to Bourdieu (1986), capital also comes in a variety of forms other than financial capital. As Knoke (1999) pointed out, the Bourdieuian model includes (a) human capital which refers to the knowledge and skills of individuals; (b) cultural capital which are ideas and knowledge people draw upon to determine what is valued by a particular social class; and (c) social capital which is "a process by which

social actors create and mobilize their network connections within and between organizations to gain access to other social actors' resources" (p. 18). Bourdieu (1986) further developed the idea of capital as ownership of a tangible or intangible object and defined it as membership in a group that provides members with support from a shared network and access to other forms of capital collectively owned by the group. In a later study, Bourdieu (1992) coined the term "linguistic capital" to describe the phenomenon in which individuals who speak with the grammar and accent of dominant groups enjoyed more credibility or legitimacy than those who did not.

Social capital is considered a community-level resource, functioning as an attribute of social organizations and including networks, norms, and social trust (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, Leonardi, & Nanetti, 1993). According to Coleman (1988), social capital is constructed from norms, social networks, and interpersonal relationships and helps members of a group develop trust and create reciprocal social relationships. Stolle and Hooghe (2003) assert that these associations and expectations of reciprocity result in members of the group "expending" social capital for other members with the expectation that the favors will be repaid in the future. Thus, social capital is built as communities develop trust among members and create expectations of reciprocal social relations, allowing these groups to accomplish much more than a comparable group with less capital (Coleman, 1988). Access to support from shared networks provides benefits to its members. For example, Smith (2000) asserted that non-Hispanic Whites experience labor market advantages because of greater access to influential ties with privileged members in those markets, but Hispanics still lack the social connections essential for providing access to opportunities for job advancement.

Putnam et al. (1993) asserted that social capital creates positive outcomes such as trust, civic involvement, and the building of communities. Likewise, Portes (1998) described how

involvement and participation in groups can have positive consequences for individuals and communities and how non-monetary forms of capital can be important sources of power and influence. Baker and Dutton (2007) also defined social capital as *positive* "if the means by which it is created expands the generative capacity of people and groups" (p. 326). Social capital thus affects the ability to improve an individual's position within society (Bourdieu, 1986). People with access to more social capital (a) found good jobs more quickly, (b) were more likely to be promoted, and (c) received higher performance evaluations (Krebs, 2008). A recent study by Grupo Balmaseda (2014) specifically found this same pattern to be true for Hispanic leaders.

However, there have been critiques of social capital as a "resource" that helps only selected members of groups within organizations. For example, Gauntlett (2011) asserted that Bourdieu's terms is in practice a normative description of the reality of social inequality and exclusivity in which the top-level jobs go to elite men who graduated from privileged schools. In truth Bourdieu's (1986) definition of social capital does suggest that to reach preferred positions, it is essential to have a network of personal contacts. Therefore, according to Bourdieu's principles, social capital is a resource upper-echelon leaders use to ensure that only the people they determine acceptable are allowed to join their ranks (Gauntlett, 2011; Goldthorpe, 2007). Groups who have access to social capital get better jobs, higher pay, and have more influence than those who do not (Baker, 2000). However, a study by Ferdman and Cortes (1992) revealed that Hispanic leaders had very little in common with the influential networks in the company and reported they had a hard time fitting in, which limited their opportunities for advancement.

Putnam et al. (1993) and Portes (1998) described another less than desirable aspect of social capital. Putnam et al. proposed that the social networks and norms of generalized reciprocity, such as exchanging favors or privileges with others, could be used to exclude

specific groups. According to Portes, the networks that allow group members to benefit from community relationships can also bar access to individuals outside the group. Portes also described several situations where groups use the power of social capital to monopolize control of unions, trade agreements, and other elements of the economy. A more immediate and practical example of this same phenomenon comes from another study by McDonald, Lin, and Ao (2009), who used the concept of social capital to explain occurrences of non-Hispanic Whites receiving more job information than Hispanics and other minorities, which had a significant effect on hiring patterns that disfavored Hispanics.

The theory of social capital reveals that having access to networks, norms, and social trust is an important aspect of career success, and is needed in order to reach the senior levels of leadership (Mundra et al., 2003). However, ethnic minorities enter organizations with fewer professional social networks than non-Hispanic Whites (Kay & Gorman, 2012; Singh, 2007). Santoro et al. (2012) asserted that many minorities considered social connections to non-Hispanic Whites a type of social capital because they can provide information on potential employment opportunities as well as career guidance and encouragement helpful for employment mobility. Conversely, limited access to social networks hindered individuals from reaching senior leadership (McGuire, 2000). McDonald et al. (2009) reported the existence of social network segregation, wherein minorities are "trapped in segregated social networks which isolate them from the kind of information and influence that can help them advance in their careers" (p. 386). Access to social capital is essential for Hispanics and other minorities because as Eagly and Chin (2010), asserted, "it allows people to emerge as leaders and become effective in leadership roles" (p. 218).

Efforts are underway to develop social capital among Hispanic leaders so they can learn how to gain access to networks to help them advance into upper-echelon jobs (Shaklee et. al, 2010). The National Hispanic Corporate Council program at the Southern Methodist University Cox School of Business is teaching Hispanic leaders how to form social networks to draw upon for support, information, and opportunities (Quinones, 2010). Another organization in the Midwestern United States established programs to develop social capital among Hispanic populations that aims to increase trust, networks, and leadership within Hispanic communities (Westwood & Chandran, 2013). In California, the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund created a 12-week leadership program for Hispanics to help parents develop both social and intellectual capital (Bolivar & Chrispeels, 2011). The efforts to build social capital in these three examples are a promising step in the right direction, but Hispanics and other minorities still lack effective ties to dominant groups which control the high status networks and enjoy greater social standings and power in organizations (Knoke, 1999; Mundra, et al., 2003; Santoro, et al., 2012).

Chapter Summary

The literature has demonstrated that Hispanics face a number of challenges to high-level leadership positions, from discrimination to lack of mentors, opportunities, and qualifications; yet, there were some individuals who achieved success in spite of the obstacles. The literature reflected substantial research on women in leadership, but studies on ethnic minorities were minimal and mostly focused on African American men (Chin, 2013; Okozi, et al., 2009). What research did not reveal was how Hispanic leaders overcame challenges to reach senior leader status and what those experiences were like. To address this gap in the literature, I posed the following research questions: (a) what were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions and (b) how did the participants successfully overcome barriers?

I studied the career experiences of successful Hispanic men to gain insight into their perspectives and provide a point of reference for other aspiring Hispanic leaders who wish to reach the top levels of corporate or public service in the United States. I used a qualitative research design to conduct the study. I selected a qualitative approach because it enabled me to capture participant viewpoints as shared through their personal experiences (Lichtman, 2013; Marshall and Rossman, 2011; Yin, 2011). Documenting participant perspectives from their individual experiences was significant because it provided me with a deeper understanding of how the members in this study were able to successfully rise to senior-level leadership positions.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic male leaders who successfully reached senior leadership positions. I conducted this study using a qualitative interpretive approach. Qualitative research covers a broad range of methods, all which share a common goal of exploring and understanding the meaning people assign to specific problems or social phenomena (Creswell, 2011). Holloway and Wheeler (2010) defined qualitative research as a way of studying how people "interpret and make sense of their experiences and the world in which they live" (p. 3). I selected a qualitative interpretive methodology for this study because I wanted to capture the perspectives of Hispanic leaders as shared through their personal accounts. I sought to determine how they were able to rise successfully to top leadership positions.

Characteristics of Qualitative Research

Qualitative research includes a variety of approaches, but its primary objective is to provide in-depth understanding of the world by studying people's experiences, perspectives, and pasts (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Another premise of qualitative research is that meaning and understanding of events is constructed when individuals interact with their world and share their stories with others (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2014; Linde, 1993; Merriam & Associates, 2002). In choosing qualitative research methodology to conduct this study, I thus recognized that (a) I would have to capture detailed descriptions of the participants' lives, experiences, and perspectives, (b) I would need to construct meaning and understanding from participant accounts, and (c) each participant would have a different interpretation of his own experiences.

Marshall and Rossman (2011) considered qualitative research as best suited for research that uses the context, setting, and participant frames of reference as main aspects of the study.

Yin (2011) maintained that qualitative methodology (a) offers flexibility to conduct a wide-range of in-depth studies, (b) allows researchers to pursue a broad area of inquiry such as "studying the meaning of people's lives, under real world conditions" (p. 7), and (c) opens up topics of genuine interest to the researcher. I drew upon Yin's notion of flexibility to examine an issue that as a Hispanic male researcher, with aspirations of leadership, I considered interesting to explore, important in today's multicultural environment, and relevant to my future goals and career path.

Interpretive Design

Qualitative research has many different inquiry strategies to choose from, but I selected a qualitative interpretive approach because it enabled a deeper understanding of how people interpret and construct meaning from their experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Merriam and Associates (2002) described the characteristics of qualitative interpretative research as "the researcher is interested in understanding how participants make meaning of a situation, meaning is mediated through the researcher as the primary instrument, the process is inductive, and the outcome is descriptive" (p. 6). Because the purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the perspectives of Hispanic leaders, as the researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection and analysis. I used the participant interviews to support subsequent analysis. By analyzing the details of the participant perspectives from the interviews, I developed a deeper understanding of the obstacles Hispanic male leaders encountered. This insight enabled me to describe the various methods the leaders used to overcome those challenges. I also used the participants' own words to construct meaning from their experiences. Examining participant experiences from their perspective helped me place my personal views aside and lessened the chances of introducing personal biases into the study.

Site and Participant Selection

This section discusses the identification and selection of study sites and participants, as well as the methods I used to gain access to those research locations and participants. Specifically, I describe the various organizations I contacted to gain access to individuals who met the participant criteria for this study. I also explain the method I used to identify the participants and the selection process.

Gaining access to research locations. The literature revealed that only a small percentage of Hispanic males ever become senior leaders (Deeran, 2009; Holladay, 2005; Quinones, 2010). Therefore, I was initially concerned that this factor would limit the participant pool. However, because the study was conducted in a large city in the southwestern United States, the demographic makeup of the local area allowed me to identify a suitable number of participants. Hispanics make up approximately 63% of the total population in this metropolitan location (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2010). Performing research in a city with a high percentage of Hispanics in the total population increased my chances of successfully locating individuals who fit the specialized participant criteria needed for this study.

To gain access to organizations, I used Walford's (2008) strategy, which was to convince people who can grant entry about the research benefits. I attempted to point out the positive aspects of the study to the leaders in targeted organizations. For example, I approached a local military installation and met with an equal opportunity representative who supported the research and put me in touch with her representatives in individual units. I then contacted gatekeepers in other units on the base who had access to senior leaders. Creswell (2013) defined gatekeepers as formal or informal leaders, contacts, or colleagues in the targeted organizations. Before outsiders can meet with high-ranking military personnel or civilians, they must first be cleared through

gatekeepers, which in this case were the senior leader's administrative and executive support staff. I was able to use my insider position as a retired military member to establish positive relations with military and civilian executive officers and administrators who were willing to assist in my efforts to contact senior leaders on the installation.

Other groups I visited to gain access to study participants were local colleges and universities. I discovered that graduate study and research departments had connections to local business communities through various events such as conferences, symposia, and community service engagements. In addition, those institutions kept in contact with alumni who had become local businessmen. I also spoke with individuals enrolled in university doctoral programs. Many of the people I contacted were established professionals in their fields and assigned to leadership positions across private, public, and educational occupational sectors. These doctoral students introduced me to potential participants from their own extended networks.

Participant identification and criteria. To identify participants, I made contact with individuals and organizations with access to potential candidates who fit the criteria required for the research. Since the research goal was to gather a wide range of perspectives from Hispanic male leaders, a purposeful sampling approach was used to identify participants who were (a) Hispanic male of Mexican heritage, (b) currently or formerly assigned to senior leadership positions, (c) educated in post secondary U.S. schools, and (d) employed primarily in the United States. Because Hispanics are a widely diverse ethnic group consisting of multiple national origins, I limited the search to only Hispanic males of Mexican origin in accordance with the Office of Management and Budget definition used during the 2010 U.S. Census because this group was more widely represented in this area (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011a). The participants also had to be current or former senior leaders in the private or public sectors. In addition, this

study focused only on individuals who had pursued higher education and spent a majority of their professional careers in the United States. My intent was to examine experiences from Hispanic male leaders who have succeeded in this country so other Hispanic men, who want to follow a similar career path, might benefit from the research. I excluded individuals who did not meet these conditions.

Identification Strategy. I used multiple strategies to identify participants for this study such as Internet searches of organizational homepages, directories, business and social networks. In addition, I engaged in phone calls, personal visits, and followed-up on leads obtained by word of mouth. For example, I conducted a web search on six individuals and was able to obtain their mailing addresses through public records, which enabled me to write them personal letters. I also used social media networks such as Facebook and LinkedIn to search for participants. I sent requests to my associates on these accounts and asked them to locate individuals who might fit the criteria for the study and request their permission to pass me their contact information.

I implemented snowball sampling as another method to identify prospective candidates for the study. To apply snowball sampling, once I made contact with a potential participant, I asked him to identify other Hispanic men with similar backgrounds and experiences who might be interested in participating. A snowball sampling approach is a helpful tool when "studying hidden or hard to reach participants" (Lichtman, 2013, p. 192). Snowball sampling is also effective when researchers cannot find the required number of research participants (Yin, 2011).

Gaining access to participants. Once I established the participant criteria and identified possible candidates, I attempted to gain access to them. Some of the participants were what Marshall and Rossman (2011) classified as "elites" because they hold positions of power and influence, which limited my access and their availability. Initially, obtaining access was difficult

because the participants did not know me and were not clear about my motives. Relying on Walford's (2008) guidance that researchers must build relationships and trust, I was able to create a connection with the participants by contacting them, explaining the objectives of the study, and informing them that they had an opportunity to help other aspiring Hispanic leaders by telling their stories. As a result, I succeeded in gaining participant support for the research, which led to mutual trust, confidence, and cooperation. Merriam and Associates (2002) asserted that this type of trust produces rich data and enhances the trustworthiness of qualitative studies.

Selection of participants. Using the previously discussed strategies of Internet searches, phone calls, personal visits, word of mouth, and personal letters, I was able to identify 15 individuals who fit the initial study criteria. However, due to scheduling conflicts, eight of the candidates were not available for interviews during my required timeframe so I removed them from the list, resulting in seven viable participants. In addition, I was able to reach out to a senior leader with whom I had both a personal and professional relationship in the past. This individual put me in touch with the Director of the Federal Executive Board, which is comprised of 63 federal agencies, representing over 91,000 federal employees in the local metropolitan area (Federal Executive Board, 2014). The director emailed several senior-level leaders who fit the study participant criteria and passed along my research abstract and contact information. As a result, three individuals called me and expressed interest in participating in the study.

I confirmed a final total of 10 participants for this study. Even though Lichtman (2013) claimed there is no required number of participants needed for a qualitative study, I determined that 10 participants was sufficient in this case because they were from four diverse professions (a) corporate business, (b) federal civil service, (c) military service, and (d) academia. The use of four different professions enabled me to conduct a cross-case analysis between them. According

to Borman, Clarke, Cotner, and Lee (2006), cross-case studies involve the collection and analysis of data from multiple examples to increase understanding of a topic or issue. Furthermore, one advantage of cross-case analysis is that it allows for a "greater opportunity to generalize across several representations of the phenomenon," which may be more compelling to a reader than the results from a single case (Borman, et al., 2006, p.123). Therefore, by applying a cross-case approach, I attempted to strengthen the potential transferability of the study to other aspiring Hispanic male leaders. Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014) asserted that the sample selection in a qualitative study should contain enough diversity to encourage broader applicability when appropriate. Cross-case analysis helps deepen understanding and applicability. Another factor that helped me decide on a final total of 10 participants was Saumure and Given's (2008) definition of data saturation, in which the collection of new data would not provide additional meaningful or relevant information to support the research. Saumure and Given stated that data saturation may be achieved more quickly if the sample is unified, such as same demographic group; thus, because of the similar backgrounds and data emerging from the participants, I determined saturation had been achieved in this case. Table 3 illustrates the 10 participants by pseudonym, industry assigned, and leadership position they held at the time of the interviews.

During the selection process, I contacted the prospective participants by both invitation letter (Appendix A) and email to request their participation. I included a short summary of my background, along with the study's purpose, objectives, and research questions, as well as my contact information. If a response was not received within two weeks, I would follow-up with a phone call or email to determine the status of my request and their continued desire to participate in the study. Within 3 weeks of my initial interview request, I received positive confirmation that all 10 individuals would participate in the study.

Table 3

Research Participants by Industry and Leadership Position

Participant	Industry				Leadership Position
	Military	Federal Service	Corporate	Academia	
Alex	X				Retired General Officer
Benjamin				X	Dean, State University
Carlos		X			Federal Government Executive (GS-14)
Daniel			X		Corporate Executive
Eduardo			X		Corporate Executive
Frederick			X		Corporate Executive
Gabriel		X			Federal Government Executive (GS-15)
Hector	X				Military and Federal Government Executive (GS-15)
Ismael				X	President, Local College
Julian				X	President/CEO, Educational Association

Note. Pseudonyms were assigned to each participant to ensure confidentiality. Broad leadership position descriptions were also used to avoid identifying the specific organizations where the participants worked. The names are listed in the order of conducted interviews.

Institutional Review Board, Contacting Participants, and Participant Profiles

This section discusses the Institutional Review Board protocol I followed to protect the rights and welfare of the participants involved in this research. I also describe my process for obtaining informed consent from the participants, as well as the procedures I used to contact participants to schedule the interviews. Finally, a synopsis of each participant's personal history is included for background context.

Institutional Review Board process. Prior to initiating the interviews, I obtained approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB process was needed to safeguard study participant privacy, confidentiality, rights, and privileges, as well as protect them from possible physical or psychological harm. Following Creswell's (2011) guidance and the university IRB requirements, I ensured (a) participants and gatekeepers understood the potential impact of the research, (b) participants were aware that any possible harmful or intimate information disclosed during the interview would be kept confidential and protected, and (c) participants were treated with dignity and respect. I also informed the participants they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

I obtained the participants verbal commitment to participate in the study and emailed them the subject consent forms (Appendix B) to ensure they understood

- the purpose of the study;
- participation was voluntary;
- the risks and benefits of the study
- identities would be protected;
- who had access to the information; and
- how the information would be safeguarded.

To ensure full disclosure in the research, I reviewed the consent form with each participant prior to the interview and fully explained the consent process to him. After the participant agreed to the terms, he signed the consent form and I provided him with a signed copy of the document.

Contacting the participants. After receiving IRB approval, I contacted the participants and negotiated the dates and times for the interviews. I worked closely with the participants to ensure the interviews were scheduled on a date, time, and location most convenient to them.

Once participant selection and IRB approval had been finalized, I began to research participant backgrounds to learn as much about them as possible prior to the interviews. I contacted their administrative staff to request biographies. I also searched online for news articles and organizational profiles featuring the participants and used Internet search engines to obtain information about them on the World Wide Web, which is addressed in the next section. The information I gathered gave me background on their duties, responsibilities, and industries, allowing me to minimize the time spend discussing those areas during the interviews.

Participant backgrounds. This section contains a brief personal history of each of the 10 participants by pseudonym. I obtained the participant information during the discussions I had with them prior, during, and after the interview sessions. I removed all descriptive details from the participants' biographical information to protect their identities. The participant biographies are listed in alphabetical order:

Alex. Alex is a retired military general officer. He was born and raised in the United States, near the Mexican border where a majority of the residents are of low socioeconomic status. His childhood dream was to find a way to get out of poverty and help his family. He performed well academically throughout elementary school, high school, and college. Early in his life, his two older brothers, who had served in the military, became his role models. One factor that drove Alex to success was his view of himself as inherently competitive. Regardless of the situation, he always strove to be the best. Alex learned early in life that he was treated differently from other people who were not ethnic minorities. This problem was not apparent to him until he left the predominantly Hispanic population of his hometown. Although he occasionally experienced discrimination during his career, he used those instances to motivate himself because he did not like being told that he was not as good as others solely due to his

cultural background. Alex became aware of the importance of leadership and teamwork from both his high school and college ROTC programs. From his first military assignment to his last, Alex understood that his organizational and personal successes relied on the strength of his teams, which allowed him to reach the top levels of his profession.

Benjamin. Benjamin is a college dean at a major state university. His parents were the first in their families to graduate from high school and Benjamin credits them for motivating him towards education at an early age and sacrificing much to send him to private schools. Like Alex, Benjamin grew up in a low socioeconomic status community with a high Hispanic population. However, because of his academic achievements, Benjamin received a scholarship to attend a state university where he was introduced to a new set of norms and unwritten rules on how to interact with diverse groups and cultures. Benjamin continued his education, completing his master's and Ph.D. and then began a career in public education. Benjamin had considered a long-term career in school psychology, but mentors advised him to work in higher education with Hispanic students and teachers in order to have a larger impact on his community. He quickly became a premiere advisor on special education for limited English speaking Hispanic students and was asked by many states in the country to write training standards for teachers of these students. He was later promoted to department chair and then dean at the university.

Carlos. Carlos is a 35-year-career civil service leader in the federal government. He grew up as a military dependent in different locations throughout the country and was exposed to racism at an early age. When Carlos' father left the military, his family settled in a U.S./Mexican border town. Because the majority of primary schools in the area consisted of Hispanic students with minimal English proficiency, the school district's focus was on language so Carlos was not challenged academically and only learned basic academic skills. Later, his mother, who had no

formal education, convinced Carlos to attend college where he excelled. While working on his second master's degree, Carlos was contacted about a potential job with the federal government at a local military base and was hired as an analyst. He stated that it was difficult to get promoted, especially without knowing the right people. Other challenges Carlos faced were a lack of mentors and job broadening and leadership opportunities to further his career. He overcame these barriers by volunteering for professional development training opportunities as they became available. These courses enhanced his credentials, qualified him for higher-level jobs, and helped promote him to a senior leader position.

Daniel. Daniel is an executive at a privately held firm. Daniel grew up in a middle-class military family. Both of his parents had high school diplomas; however, they did not attend college until later in their lives. Daniel's parents wanted him to attend an Ivy League school but did not have the connections or resources to realize that goal. Daniel decided to attend a state university and joined a large corporation upon graduation. Early on, Daniel learned how to set goals and work hard to achieve them. He also discovered he possessed certain leadership qualities and would take a stance on issues, which gave him valuable experience in defending his point of view or position. He has never felt that being Hispanic was a disadvantage for him and he believes individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity, can compete equally based on knowledge, ability, and leadership skills. Daniel has an extensive network of mentors, but he regrets not finding them sooner because he could have avoided some of the pitfalls he encountered early in his career. Daniel strongly advocates continuous learning and self-improvement and credits his leadership and communication skills for helping him succeed in business.

Eduardo. Eduardo is an executive at a non-profit organization. He was born in a U.S. border town but lived the first few years of his life in Mexico. His family returned to the U.S.

prior to Eduardo's entry into grade school. Spanish was his first language, but he was able to quickly learn English at a young age. Eduardo was raised in a single-parent household where he developed a strong work ethic early in life to help support his family. After graduating from high school, Eduardo enlisted in the Air Force and learned that he had a talent for leading people. He later completed his military obligation, obtained a college degree, and was hired by a large medical corporation. Applying the leadership principles and people skills he learned in the military, he quickly advanced through the executive ranks by bringing in new business and helping grow his company. Eduardo did not have a mentor or become part of a network until later in his career. He has since developed an extensive network and his contacts are now one of his most valuable assets. Eduardo also described his competitive nature and drive to excel. These attributes, along with business expertise, elevated him to the top executive levels of his company.

Frederick. Frederick is an executive at a Fortune 500 company. He was raised in a low-income urban environment. Frederick's father did not play a large role in his life so his grandfather became his role model. Frederick's grandfather instilled a sense of stability, pride, and work ethic in him. Frederick carried these characteristics with him throughout high school, college, and his career. He also credits his participation in sports for making him competitive and learning good sportsmanship. During his teenage years, Frederick worked in his grandfather's store where he developed a sense for business. After college, Frederick landed an entry-level job at a large corporation. He was able to establish mentoring relationships with key leaders who were both Hispanic and non-Hispanic. From these mentors, Frederick learned to think strategically and act decisively, allowing him to become a better leader. He did face challenges throughout his career because of his cultural background, but he never let it affect his attitude towards the job. Frederick reached senior leadership status quickly, and at a young age.

However, he remained grounded because of the lessons he learned from his grandfather. Frederick recalled the advice his grandfather gave him about professionalism, confidence, and integrity that he still applies in his life today.

Gabriel. Gabriel is the director of a local federal government agency. Like Frederick, he grew up in a low socioeconomic Hispanic community in a large metropolitan area. Although Spanish was the primary language spoken in his neighborhood, Gabriel's parents made him speak only English at home. Gabriel completed high school, but received little career advice from his school counselors. He started college but was later drafted into the Army and sent to Vietnam. Upon his discharge, he applied and was selected for a federal civil service job. While working at that location, he attended college part-time and eventually obtained a bachelor's degree. Gabriel took advantage of various professional development opportunities and became part of an extensive network where he was able to build strong relationships with influential members. Gabriel said his connections to this network created new opportunities to further his career. As a result, he quickly progressed and was assigned to positions with increased responsibilities. Gabriel was later selected for a senior leadership program and said he used the knowledge he gained from this course to enhance his leadership skills and develop his employees. Discrimination had not been a factor in Gabriel's career. The bigger hurdles he said he had to overcome were personal challenges such as education, professional development, and communication skills.

Hector. Hector is a former military member who is now a senior civilian leader at a local military installation. Hector's parents were migrant workers and Spanish was the primary language spoken at home. Although Hector's parents were not educated, they encouraged him to go to school. He also learned the value of hard work at an early age, as his family relocated often

to labor in the agricultural industry. Hector's first big challenge was language; he did not speak English, and the schools he attended did not have bilingual programs or teachers who spoke Spanish. However, Hector's greatest influence during these forming years was the opportunity to attend catholic high school. The school faculty took a special interest in Hector and helped him improve his basic academic skills. After completing high school, Hector joined the Army. In the military, Hector learned discipline, continued his education, and enhanced his leadership skills. After the Army, Hector wanted to continue serving his country so he applied and was selected for a federal civil service job. Hector quickly advanced in his field and was handpicked to attend an elite government leadership program where he earned a master's degree. Hector found mentors who guided him during important points in his life and provided the career advice he needed to progress into the senior levels of leadership.

Ismael. Ismael is a president at a community college. The biggest influence in Ismael's life has been his parents. Although Ismael's parents grew up as migrant workers, they both later earned college degrees. Ismael learned the value of public service early in life from his parents so he decided to pursue a career in higher education. He worked at both the university and community college levels, but remained in the latter because he believed it provided him with more opportunities to help Hispanics and other ethnic minorities. Ismael developed strong relationships with his mentors and they provided him with advice and guidance during critical points in his life. Furthermore, Ismael spoke about the positive benefits he gained from his cross-cultural mentoring experiences. One mentor in particular, a non-Hispanic White male, made a big difference in Ismael's life. This mentor was the university vice-president where Ismael worked. He periodically met with Ismael and encouraged him to pursue advanced degrees. As a result, Ismael completed both a master's and doctoral degree and used his knowledge to mentor

promising future leaders, both Hispanic and non-Hispanic. Ismael did encounter instances of subtle racism, but it was not a pattern, and it did not affect his ability to further his career.

Julian. Julian is the president and CEO of a non-profit organization focused on Hispanic higher education. Julian was born in Mexico and said he learned many of his leadership traits from his grandfather in a small Mexican town where he was raised. In that village, Julian stated he learned the family values of honesty, hard work, and sharing. Julian also said that his teachers saw potential in him so they convinced his family to allow Julian to attend school in a bigger city. As Julian recalled, it was a very important moment in his life because it opened up more opportunities for him. Julian completed high school and college and began a teaching career in Mexico. During this period, Julian became friends with an American couple who convinced him to immigrate to the U.S. to pursue a graduate degree. Julian followed their advice and began working on a master's degree at a college in Michigan where he met two professors who later became his mentors. Julian said the professors inspired him to complete a doctoral degree. After completing his Ph.D., Julian had planned to remain in the education field, but was contacted by a non-profit organization that provided scholarships to ethnic minority students. He decided to join this organization and has been in his current position for the past 17 years.

Participant summary. While all 10 individuals I interviewed shared a Hispanic identity, they each came from varied backgrounds and worked across multiple fields. Eight of the participants were raised in relative poverty, while the other two grew up in a middle-class environment with parents who had some form of education beyond high school. In addition, for 8 of the 10 participants, Spanish was the primary language spoken at home and each had role models who instilled values and principles that guided them through life, such as the importance of hard work and education. All the participants encountered some form of barrier that impeded

their progression to top leadership positions. The challenges ranged from discrimination to lack of mentors, opportunities, and access to influential people; yet, the participants achieved success despite these difficulties. These individuals pursued careers in the private, government, military, and academic sectors and demonstrated exceptional leadership skills. The ability to effectively lead people helped advance their careers and eventually become senior leaders.

Data Collection Procedures

The research protocol for this qualitative interpretive study consisted of face-to-face interviews. As the researcher, I was the primary instrument for data collection. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative researchers are the key instruments in gathering research data through the examination of documents, observation of behavior, or interview of participants. Because I wanted to understand the meaning behind people's accounts of their experiences, I followed Marshall and Rossman's (2011) guidance and used an in-depth interview strategy. In addition, the use of in-depth interviews enabled me to describe the meanings of the participants' experiences in their own words.

Interview sites. The interviews were conducted at locations both comfortable and convenient to the participants. While scheduling the interview appointments with the participants, I requested office space in their facilities for the meetings. Lichtman (2013) advised that the setting for interviews should be quiet and private; therefore, I suggested a vacant office or conference room to minimize the interruptions. If those locations were not available, we used the participant's office or work area. One participant did not want to conduct the interview at his place of employment so we met at his residence. I agreed to his request because as Dickson-Swift, James, Kippen, and Liamputtong (2007) confirmed, more research interviews are taking place in people's homes and people are now giving researchers access into their private lives. In

fact, this interview was quite effective; not only was the session conducted professionally and with no interruptions, but it also gave me an opportunity to spend additional time with the participant, build rapport, and interact with him in an informal setting.

Interview questions. For the interviews, I used open-ended questions to (a) allow flexibility in participant responses, (b) avoid "yes or no" answers, and (c) ensure a continuous flow of dialogue during the conversations. The questions I used during the interviews can be viewed at Appendix C. Open-ended questions gave the participants an opportunity to provide comprehensive and unobstructed responses to questions that enabled me to document their perspectives in sufficient detail. Brenner (2006) claims that the intention of open-ended interviews is to understand participants on their own terms and how they make meaning of their thoughts, lives, and experiences.

Interview duration and recording. I did not place a time limit on the interviews, but due to the participants' levels of responsibility, they informed me up front that they could meet only as long as their schedule allowed. However, in each case, once the interviews began, the participants made sure they answered all my questions to the best of their abilities. As a result, I successfully obtained interview sessions ranging from 60 to 90 minutes for each individual. All 10 interviews were completed during each scheduled appointment so follow-up meetings were not required. However, I did send the finished transcripts back to the participants for member checks as described in the section on trustworthiness included later in this chapter. I used a Sony digital-audio recorder as the primary device to document the interviews. I also activated my cell phone's recorder as backup. The use of audio recording devices allowed me to minimize the amount of note taking and direct my full attention to the participant.

Interview flow. The interviews were semi-structured and the flow of questions was arranged in a manner that aligned the discussions with the study's research questions. However, the interview questions were used only as a guide. If a participant, purposely or inadvertently, chose to deviate from a specific question, I did not interrupt him. Instead, I made a note to return to the question at a later point in the interview if the topic was not fully answered, or if more detailed information was necessary. Furthermore, many of the participants answered multiple interview questions while responding to one initial question so I paused between each response to make sure I annotated my notes under the proper columns. I also used probing and follow-up questions to expand participant dialogue in areas related to the research questions and encourage the participants to elaborate on responses as needed (Brenner, 2006; Spradley, 1979).

Determining direction of interviews. I used the participant responses and willingness to discuss their perspectives to determine the overall direction of the interviews. Hammersley (2003) indicated that the goal of interviewing is to obtain information on what people think and what they have experienced. I followed the same strategy to capture the details of participant perspectives in this study in order to gain a deeper understanding of the events that influenced their careers. Therefore, after each interview, I examined the participant responses to assess the direction of the discussion and determine if the responses were applicable to my research questions. If I noticed a particular theme or category from the initial analysis, I pursued that line of inquiry during the following interview with the next participant. For example, when the first participant said that Spanish was his primary language growing up, I was surprised because his English enunciation was flawless. After I included that question in subsequent interviews, I discovered that Spanish was the primary language during childhood for 8 of the 10 participants.

Use of field notes. I composed brief field notes at the end of each interview question to help summarize the main points of the discussion, capture observations surrounding the participants' responses, and jot down areas that I wanted to revisit. Note taking created a slight pause in between questions, which gave the participants opportunities to reflect on previous responses in case they wanted to add or clarify information. I also used the notes to identify follow-up questions to participant responses that required further explanation. Lichtman (2013) described field notes as an observation of the surroundings, people, and activities, which are written both prior to and at the end of each interview session. Therefore, I also observed each participant's office during the interviews and included detailed descriptions of the surrounding area in my field notes in order to enrich my description of the participant. For instance, I noted if he (a) displayed awards or mementos, (b) had pictures of other influential people, (c) posted motivational quotes, or (d) exhibited family photos. The field notes helped contribute to the rich descriptions of each participant and his setting.

Data Analysis Procedures

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic male leaders who successfully reached senior leadership positions. I analyzed the interview data to determine how the participants successfully overcame barriers to rise to the top levels in their respective fields. Because data analysis is the process of making sense of the data, Yin (2011) asserted that most qualitative analysis follows a five-cycle phase: (a) compile the database, (b) disassemble the data, (c) reassemble the data, (d) interpret the data, and (e) conclude the study. I took a similar approach with the information I collected during this study and used Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS) to analyze and make sense of the data. Spradley developed DRS as a means to analyze data "from an interpretive perspective

using a cultural lens" (Spradley, 1980, p. 116). DRS is a data collection and analysis procedure that offers a precise, methodical, and rigorous approach to the collection and organization of qualitative research data (Parfitt, 1996).

To apply Spradley's (1979) DRS approach to this study, I followed the steps of: (a) locating participants, (b) interviewing the participants, (c) making an ethnographic record, (d) asking descriptive questions, (e) analyzing the interviews, (f) making a domain analysis, and (g) making a taxonomic analysis. The findings for the final two steps of making domain and taxonomic analyses are illustrated in Chapter 4: Methodology. Even though DRS has been used primarily in ethnographic research, adapting a DRS methodology provided a method for me to interpret the participants' actual words rather than my personal interpretation of them (Lee et al., 2010). Also, the use of DRS during the detailed analyses of participant transcripts kept me accountable to an insider or emic point of view, which was important because as D'Alonzo (2012) claimed, an emic approach "directs the researcher to pay close attention to the participants' understanding of the meaning of their experiences" (p. 126).

I began the initial data analysis process during the interviews. Marshall and Rossman (2011) suggested that data analysis in qualitative research begin at the same time as data collection. They recommended this approach because if the researcher accumulates too much data up front, then the sheer volume of material that needs to be subsequently processed can become unfocused, repetitious and overwhelming. As part of the ongoing analysis, during the interviews I also reflected upon other questions posed by Marshall and Rossman such as, what was I learning from participant stories? How could the details help shed light on the broader research questions? What were participant responses suggesting? Would I need to collect additional data and would I need to revise any of my research questions? I considered these

questions before and after each interview in order to refine the interview protocol, if needed, and keep my focus on the information I deemed necessary to support the research purpose. To help organize the large amount of interview data, I decided to categorize the analyses into five different levels.

Levels of analysis. I conducted five levels of analysis to construct a more comprehensive understanding of how the participants in this study successfully overcame barriers to reach senior leadership positions. The levels of analysis I used consisted of (a) Level-one: Analyzing participant responses, (b) Level-two: Transcribing as analysis, (c) Level-three: Identifying key ideas, (d) Level-four: Domain analysis, and (e) Level-five: Taxonomic analysis.

Level one: Analyzing participant responses. To initiate the first level of analysis, I applied Schutt's (2011) guidance that the analysis of qualitative research data begins in the field, and performed the Level-one analysis while conducting the participant interviews. During the interviews, I focused solely on understanding the participants' words and phrases and pursued dialogue that allowed them to "vocalize their priorities and describe the world as they perceived it" (Yin, 2011, p.136). By following this advice, I avoided interjecting my personal biases or listening to only what I wanted to hear instead of what the participants were actually saying. After asking each interview question, I listened for particular cues in the participant responses. If the response was relevant to the research questions and I needed additional details, I conducted purposeful probing and follow-up inquiries. Other analytical choices I made during the interviews were: (a) shifting topic focus back to research objectives whenever participants deviated from the interview design and (b) modifying interview questions to reformulate those that were unclear or failed to elicit responses relevant to the research questions. Table 4 displays

two of the interview questions I asked Ismael during his interview in Column A, along with his responses in Column B, and the probing questions and follow-up questions I used in Column C.

Table 4

Level-One Analysis: Interview Questions, Participant Responses, and Probing and Follow-up Questions

Column A Interview Questions	Column B Participant Responses	Column C Probing and Follow-up Questions
"Tell me about your journey to reach your current position."	"Both of my parents came from migrant families. But, they saw the opportunity to break that cycle and got an education. My father went into the Marines and used the G.I. Bill to go to college. My mom got her degree later in life. They both taught me that it was important to give back and constantly articulated the value of public service."	Tell me how your parents' experiences influenced you to pursue education and eventual complete your Ph.D. Tell me about the events that inspired you to pursue your current career path in higher education.
"Tell me about some of the barriers you had overcome to get to your current position."	"I saw differences in how I was treated versus my Anglo colleagues. Once I was in a meeting where I was the only Latino amongst four Anglo men and the subtleties they displayed were interesting, not just with me, but also when they spoke about Hispanic students. They just brought up generalizations and other things and I thought wow this is very interesting."	Tell me how you felt when these colleagues treated you differently? What did you say? What did you do? What would you tell aspiring Hispanic leaders that encounter similar barriers? What do you think needs to change to eliminate barriers such as biases and stereotypes?

As shown in Table 4, once Ismael answered the first interview question about his journey to reach his current position, I interjected probing and follow-up questions to gain more clarification or draw out additional information. In this case, the additional questions helped me identify the experiences and events that influenced Ismael to pursue higher education and led him to the current career path that enabled him to reach senior leadership. The other interview

questions and responses were conducted in the same manner through the purposeful use of probing and follow-up questions.

Level-two: Transcribing as analysis. I began the second level of analysis by transcribing the interviews. I understood beforehand that transcribing would be a challenge. Experts have argued that transcribing is not simply a neutral process of turning audio and video records into scripted text, but it is an analytical process that can significantly influence the outcome of research studies (Baker, 1997; Bailey, 2008; Bucholtz, 2007; Hammersley, 2010; Lapadat & Lindsay, 1999). Therefore, during the transcribing process, I allowed myself to become immersed in the data, which as Hammersley (2010) asserted enables the researcher to present a more accurate representation of events that occurred. Furthermore, according to Lapadat and Lindsay (1999), the process of transcribing allows researchers to become more familiar with the data and identify important insights from the interviews that only the researcher could describe.

I initiated the transcribing process by listening to the interview recordings a number of times; thereby, becoming more familiar with the data after each pass. I also referred to my field notes while transcribing to identify references I made about participants' facial expressions, body movements, tone, or inflection since textual information only provides one aspect of transcription and according to Wellard and McKenna (2001), "a range of factors need to be considered in order to produce a valid transcript" (p. 183). On the other hand, I made a decision to exclude data I considered not relevant to the research, such as comments about the "weather" or "good restaurants," verbal tics such as clearing of the throat, coughing, or sniffing, and speech disfluencies, such as unidentifiable words. Although I captured this information in my field notes, I chose not to include them during the transcription phase (and thus, ultimately, in the final data analysis) because of the time required to determine if the actions had meaning or if they

were just involuntary reflexes. I also believed that including that information into the transcribing process would only, as Skukauskaite (2014) described, obscure the meanings that the interviewees were trying to communicate to me. Furthermore, from the rich conversations I had with the participants during the interviews, it had become clear to me that there would be no material gains to this study by adding the extra data; perhaps because of my visible and audible similarities to these Hispanic men, they were more direct in telling me exactly the challenges they experienced as they rose to become senior leaders. Moreover, by making the decision to exclude para-verbal data from all interview transcripts, I was able to maintain a systematic approach during the transcribing process. I followed this format to transcribe all 10 interviews.

Level-three: Identifying key ideas. Once I completed transcribing the interviews, I began the third level of analysis, which was to look for key ideas (a) important to the participants, (b) contributing to their success, and (c) supporting the research purpose and questions. For example, I identified the key idea of *poverty* from a transcript segment of Alex's interview, in which he described his childhood experiences growing up in poverty and dreaming of escaping it. I then entered the key ideas in the "key ideas extracted column" as reflected in Table 5.

Table 5

Transcript Segment from Alex's Interview Identifying Key Idea of Poverty

Column A	Column B	Column C
Interviewer	Alex	Key Ideas Extracted
"Please talk a little bit about your journey from growing up in your home town to where you are today."	"I was born into a very poor family. Basically, all of my memories of growing up was being on welfare and dreaming of getting out of poverty."	poverty; dreams
"How did that make you feel"?	"As I got older, I started to sense there was something better out there that I could strive for. But, growing up in that environment, you never really know or understand that you are poor. It is just what you are."	poverty; strive; dreams
"So how did that influence your decision to join the military"?	"As I got older, my role models were my older brothers who had served in the military. They became my role models for how I might escape the poverty of my hometown."	role models; poverty

The interview and follow-up questions I asked Alex are illustrated in Column A of Table 5, while Alex's responses to the questions are listed in Column B. The key ideas I extracted from Alex's responses for further analyses are displayed in Column C. I used this method throughout Alex's transcript and identified a total of 16 key ideas important to Alex's story and supported the research objectives. These 16 key ideas became my initial list of relevant terms to include in the next level of data analysis:

1. academics
2. driven
3. confidence
4. decisions
5. discrimination
6. growth
7. humble
8. leadership
9. mentoring
10. networking
11. obstacles
12. poverty
13. reflection
14. revelation
15. role models
16. values

I applied the same process to Benjamin's transcript to continue looking for additional key ideas to include in the next level of data analysis that were important to the participant and supported the research purpose and questions. Table 6 reflects a segment of Benjamin's transcript where I identified *norms* as another key idea.

Table 6

Transcript Segment from Benjamin's Interview Identifying Key Idea of Norms

Column A Interviewer	Column B Benjamin	Column C Key Ideas Extracted
"Please describe events in your life that contributed to your development and eventual success."	"At the college they have the memorial student center dedicated to individuals who gave their life in service to our country so one of the things to pay attention to is not to walk on the grass out of respect. Well the first day I got there, not knowing the rules, my parents and I had lunch by a tree near the memorial. Later, a cadet came over and told us we were not supposed to be on the grass."	rules; norms
"So, how did that encounter make you feel? What did you do about it"?	"I tried to catch on to those kind of norms. Even though I went to a college prep high school, I wasn't prepared for the cultural shock of going to a predominantly Eurocentric school. What were the unwritten rules? In the neighborhood you learned them real quick and they didn't have to be written. You knew the rules, you stayed away from certain people and certain parts of the barrio."	communication; culture; norms; standards
"Please give me other examples of these types of norms you experienced at work."	"The university I used to work at was established in 1863, but New Mexico didn't become a state until 1912. So, you have some entrenched institutional norms to say the least. I would always ask, 'wait a minute where is that in the policy'? Well, it is not in the policy, but it is how they did things around there."	communication; standards; norms

The interview and follow-up questions I asked Benjamin are listed in Column A of Table 6 and Benjamin's responses to the question are in Column B. The key ideas I extracted from

Benjamin's responses for further analyses are displayed in Column C. I applied this process to the remainder of Benjamin's transcript and identified 26 new key ideas and 12 repeated terms from the analysis of Alex's transcript for an overall total of 38 relevant terms. The following 26 new key ideas were selected from Benjamin's interview:

1. accomplishments
2. advice
3. balance
4. calling
5. choice
6. culture
7. development
8. evaluation
9. experience
10. expertise
11. illegal
12. inequity
13. learning
14. norms
15. opportunity
16. paranoia
17. politics
18. reconnecting
19. retention
20. spirituality
21. struggle
22. support
23. teamwork
24. training
25. trust
26. typical day

The 12 key ideas identified from the analysis of Alex's transcript were:

1. academics
2. driven
3. confidence
4. humble
5. leadership
6. mentoring
7. networking
8. poverty
9. reflection
10. revelation
11. role models
12. values

I then transcribed the remaining 8 participant interviews and searched for the 38 key ideas identified from both Alex and Benjamin's transcripts. The 38 relevant terms repeated with the remaining participants, but the additional key idea of *barriers* was extracted from Hector and Ismael's transcripts for a new total of 39 key ideas. Although previous participants discussed barriers to some extent, it was Hector and Ismael who described the significant impact barriers had made on their lives. Thus, after analyzing the transcripts from all 10 participants, the following 39 key ideas were identified:

1. academics
2. accomplishment
3. advice
4. balance
5. barriers
6. calling
7. choice
8. driven
9. confidence
10. culture
11. development
12. evaluation
13. experience
14. expertise
15. humble
16. illegal
17. inequity
18. leadership
19. learning
20. mentoring
21. networking
22. norms
23. opportunity
24. paranoia
25. politics
26. poverty
27. reconnecting
28. reflection
29. retention
30. revelation
31. role models
32. spirituality
33. struggle
34. support
35. teamwork
36. training
37. trust
38. typical day
39. values

After selecting the 39 key ideas from the participant transcripts, I examined them further to narrow down the number and identify the concepts that were (a) most relevant to the participants, (b) most closely aligned with the research objectives, and (c) provided the richest possible source of information needed to answer the research questions. As a result, I determined that the following 12 key ideas, from the overall total of 39, contributed most to the participants' success so I selected them to help identify domains during the next level of analysis:

1. academics
2. barriers
3. driven
4. discrimination
5. leadership
6. learning
7. mentoring
8. networking
9. norms
10. opportunity
11. role models
12. values

Reducing the number of key ideas from 39 to 12 allowed me to conduct an in-depth analysis on a limited number of categories, rather than a surface analysis on many. I realized that data saturation, which Merriam and Associates (2002) described as the point at which no new categories can be constructed from the data, was not achievable given the limited number of participants. However, the amount of data analyzed was sufficient to provide an understanding of the study topic by providing insights about domains and taxonomies that explained relationships among key ideas constructed from the perspectives of these Hispanic men.

Level four: Domain analysis. During the fourth level of analysis I conducted a preliminary domain search. I used Spradley's (1979) DRS approach to make a domain analysis. According to Spradley, the following steps are necessary to identify domains: (a) select a single semantic relationship, (b) prepare a domain analysis worksheet, (c) select a sample of informant statements, (d) search for possible cover terms and included terms that appropriately fit the semantic relationship, (e) formulate structural questions for each domain, and (f) make a list of all hypothesized domains. I selected the strict inclusion semantic relationship *X is a kind of Y* for this study and then created domain analysis worksheets. An example of a domain analysis worksheet that I used to identify the domain of being intrinsically driven from Alex's transcript is displayed in Table 7. As reflected in the table, I chose segments of the interview transcript where I had previously identified the 12 relevant terms and searched for possible included terms that fit the X is a kind of Y semantic relationship. As a result, being intrinsically driven became a potential domain. To help identify additional potential domains and included terms, I performed this process on all 10 participant transcripts.

Table 7 illustrates the identification of the being intrinsically driven domain. Column A shows the participant which in this example is Alex; Column B includes the narrative from the transcript segment; Column C reflects the transcript line number; Column D lists the possible included terms identified from the transcript segment; Column E shows the semantic relationship X is a kind of Y; and Column F identifies the potential domain constructed from the semantic relationship and included terms.

After completion of the domain analysis worksheets, I followed Spradley's (1979) guidance and tested the appropriateness of the way the semantic relationships were expressed.

Table 7

Domain Analysis Worksheet from Alex's Transcript Identifying the Domain of Being Intrinsically Driven

Column A	Column B	Column C	Column D	Column E	Column F
Participant	Transcript Narrative	Transcript Line No.	Possible Included Terms	Semantic Relationship Used	Potential Domain
Alex	"My attitude was always ok, I can beat this, I am never going to give up, I can do better and it was just a desire to win, if you will, that just kept driving me."	16	my attitude was I can beat this	X is a kind of Y	being intrinsically driven
			never going to give up		
			I can do better		
			desire to win		

This was accomplished by first selecting the four universal semantic relationships of (a) X is a kind of Y, (b) X is a part of Y, (c) X is a result of Y, and (d) X is a way to Y. I then applied each semantic relationship to bits of the transcript segments to determine which relationship fit best. As an example from Alex's transcript, the included term of *my attitude was I can beat this* is a kind of intrinsic drive. In addition, the included terms of *never going to give up*, *I can do better*, and *desire to win* are also kinds of intrinsic drive. Since the included terms fit the semantic relationship X is a kind of Y, being intrinsically driven became a potential domain. Although other semantic relationships such as X is a part of Y and X is a result of Y would have worked with the same included terms, I determined X is a kind of Y was the best fit for the domain, given the context of the interview. The finalized included terms and semantic relationship for the being intrinsically driven domain is shown at Table 8.

Table 8

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship from Alex's Transcript for the Developing Domain of Being Intrinsically Driven

Column A	Column B	Column C
Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
my attitude was I can beat this		*being intrinsically driven*
never going to give up	X is a kind of Y	
I can do better	→	
desire to win		

In Table 8, Column A includes the included terms identified from a segment of Alex's transcript and Column B reflects the semantic relationship X is a kind of Y. Thus, reading from left to right, the first included term of my attitude was I can beat this was applied to the semantic relationship in Column B which created the domain being intrinsically driven listed in Column C. The remaining included terms were applied to the semantic relationship X is a kind of Y using the same method.

I continued analyzing the other transcripts and identified other included terms related to the domain of being intrinsically driven. As a result, the finalized domain of being intrinsically driven was comprised of included terms from all 10 participants. I followed the same process to (a) examine the remaining transcripts, (b) create domain analysis worksheets, and (c) apply the semantic relationship X is a kind of Y. Consequently, I identified a total of seven domains. I selected these domains because of the important role they played in the participants' lives and their relevance to the research objectives. The seven domains are as follows:

1. encountering structural disadvantages
2. having role models
3. capitalizing on opportunities
4. being intrinsically driven
5. knowing how to lead
6. understanding the importance of mentors
7. belonging to a network

Level five: Taxonomic analysis. For the fifth level, I performed a taxonomic analysis. According to Jacob (1987), a taxonomic analysis is an in-depth study of domains to determine how they are organized and linked. From Spradley (1979), I explained differences between taxonomies and domains. While domains are a result of relationships between symbols or categories of meaning such as cover terms and included terms, taxonomies reveal the relationships among domains (Spradley, 1979). For example, during my initial examination of the being intrinsically driven domain identified during the level-four analysis at Table 8, I was not able to determine the relationship among the included terms of my attitude was I can beat this, never going to give up, I can do better, and desire to win. However, after reexamining a segment of Alex's transcript, I discovered that the term desire to win originated from instances of discrimination, which motivated Alex to try harder and prove himself as capable as his peers. This finding revealed a relationship between the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven. The following example is from a segment of Alex's transcript as he discussed his encounter with structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven:

- "When I entered the military, discrimination was much more overt."
- "All that did was motivate me to do even better because I just wouldn't accept it."
- "So you move forward, you know, this attitude of never going to accept defeat and fight to the very end to be able to succeed."

In first sentence, Alex spoke of discrimination, which I included in the encountering structural disadvantages domain. In the second sentence, Alex stated that discrimination motivated him, which I identified as part of the being intrinsically driven domain. Lastly, in the third sentence, Alex said he would fight to the end to succeed, which I also included in the intrinsically driven domain. Table 9 shows the included terms, domains, and semantic relationship from Alex's transcript segment that resulted in the making of the becoming competitive taxonomy.

Table 9

Identification of the Becoming Competitive Taxonomy from Alex's Transcript Analysis

Column A Included Terms	Column B Domains	Column C Semantic Relationship	Column D Taxonomy
Discrimination	Encountering structural disadvantages →	X is a kind of Y →	Becoming Competitive
Motivated me Fight to the end to succeed	Being Intrinsically Driven →		

From Table 9, the included terms of (a) *discrimination*, (b) *motivated me*, and (c) *fighting to the end to succeed* were included in the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven. In turn, the combined domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven along with the semantic relationship X is a kind of Y became a part of the larger taxonomy of becoming competitive.

I continued the process of analyzing the relationships among the seven domains identified in the Level-four analysis to search for additional taxonomies. As a result, the final three taxonomies were constructed from the taxonomic analysis: (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships. The detailed process for identifying the seven domains and creating the three taxonomies from the domain and taxonomic analyses is presented in Chapter 4: Methodology.

Ensuring Trustworthiness

Ensuring trustworthiness was a major consideration during this study because according to AERA Standards (2006), as the researcher, I have a responsibility to show readers that my findings can be trusted. Guba (1981) proposed four criteria for ensuring trustworthiness in

qualitative research (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability. In his research, Suter (2012) confirmed that many qualitative researchers agreed that following Guba's four principles could provide evidence for data trustworthiness, regardless of collection method used. Therefore, I applied Guba's (1981) standards of trustworthiness to this study and used Merriam and Associates (2002) guidelines for assessing the "quality" in qualitative research (p.23). I used Merriam's strategies to provide additional verification of my study's research problem and methods.

Credibility. Credibility is related to how confident the researcher is that the findings are believable and represent the facts based on the perspectives of the research participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I validated the accuracy of the interview transcripts through the member checking process. I accomplished this by sending the participants copies of the transcripts to give them an opportunity to review the data and provide feedback on any information they felt might have been misinterpreted or misrepresented. In addition, Lietz and Zayas (2010) asserted that there are strategies that qualitative researchers can employ to achieve credibility and manage the risk of researcher influence and biases in the research. Some methods they described were minimizing data collection intrusiveness and engaging in reflexivity to build self-awareness of researcher impact (Lietz & Zayas, 2010). I applied similar strategies by approaching the interviews more as informal discussions and making an effort to conceal my recording device as much as possible during the interviews. In addition, continuous reflexivity kept me aware of my potential influence on the research results.

Reflexivity is the process of critical reflection and recognition that humans bring subjectivity to the study (Merriam & Associates, 2002). Lichtman (2013) described reflexivity as researcher self-reflection, actions resulting from the reflection, and the realization that he or she

can unintentionally influence the research outcome. Therefore, understanding that my life perspectives could potentially influence the results of my research, I kept track of the reasons behind my decisions and actions in both journals and personal recordings, which helped capture my insights about the fieldwork. This process helped reveal unintentional biases and as Yin (2001) asserted, acknowledging these biases led to ideas on how to approach the analysis. I made every effort to (a) sort through my personal biases, (b) consider how they might affect various aspects of my research, (c) acknowledge my assumptions of participant perspectives, and (d) minimize the impact of my assumptions so they did not affect the results. According to Dilley (2000), a researcher must examine issues from the perspective of the participant instead of his or her own. In addition, to ensure methodological rigor and avoid imposing my interpretation, I focused my field notes on the meaning of each participant's experience from his point of view. Journaling was also a helpful tool I used to sort out my feelings during the periods when I experienced personal conflicts such participant views that were different from my own.

Dependability. The third factor of dependability refers to whether the approach to the research is consistent, steady over time and across researchers and methods, and if the process has been conducted with reasonable care (Miles et al., 2014). I made sure I maintained a consistent approach throughout all aspects of this study. For example, the interviews were performed in the same manner and the data was analyzed using the same method for each participant. However, I did understand that with qualitative research, the changing nature of social phenomena would produce different results even among similar studies (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). Thus, a different group of Hispanic senior leaders will more than likely provide different results from the current participants because of their diverse life experiences. To address the dependability issue, Shenton (2004) recommended that processes within the study be

reported in sufficient detail so that other researchers can repeat the work even if they are not able to achieve the same results. Merriam and Associates (2002) asserted that rather than obtaining the same result as the original researcher, it is more important that "given the data collected, the results make sense; they are consistent and dependable" (p. 27). Every effort was maintained in the research to provide enough detail to enable other researchers to follow a similar approach to this topic, as evidenced by the in-depth data collection and data analysis procedures implemented during this study.

I followed Merriam and Associate's (2002) guidelines for evaluating qualitative research and applied a trustworthy and rigorous approach during the study. Yin (2011) claimed that essential components for building trustworthiness and credibility in qualitative research are public accessibility and a transparent approach throughout the entire research process. I made every effort to maintain transparency in every step of the research process. First, I was explicit, clear, and open about the methods I used and actions I took during the research. Second, I listed all the steps and procedures I followed to analyze the participant interview data used to develop the findings. Third, I identified my personal biases and their potential impact on this study. By applying these efforts, I attempted to ensure the work and evidence I used to support the findings and conclusions of this study were clear and trustworthy enough to withstand public scrutiny.

Transferability. The criterion of transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied or compared to other contexts and settings (Lichtman, 2013). Under this concept, it is the reader who decides whether the results can transfer from one situation to another. I created audit trails to document the steps I took to gather the evidence. I also used a transparent approach to ensure my research procedures were explicit, clear, and open so that other people could follow my work. Additionally, I included as much detail of the participants' perspectives

as possible to (a) provide thick descriptions for readers to assess the potential transferability and (b) allow the readers to compare the study results to other settings and make their own decisions about the level of transferability (Merriam & Associates, 2002; Miles et al., 2014). As previously discussed, one of the goals in this research was to determine how Hispanic male senior leaders successfully overcame disadvantages so that other aspiring Hispanic men might benefit from their perspectives. This research topic stems from my own personal background, experiences, and interests, which are similar to the participants in this study, but it will be up to future Hispanic leaders and other readers of this research to determine whether the evidence I present is applicable to their individual circumstances. On the other hand, the high Hispanic population in the city where the study was conducted may have impacted the participants in ways that may not be transferrable to locations where the Hispanic population is not as large.

Confirmability. Guba (1981) developed the principle of confirmability in trustworthiness as a means to establish objectivity or neutrality in the research process. However, according to Krefting (1990), Guba did not view neutrality as researcher objectivity, but more as neutrality in the interpretation of data, which Shenton (2004) described as ensuring that research findings are derived from the evidence and not from researcher preferences or biases. To comply with the standards of confirmability, I followed guidance by Miles et al. (2014) who asserted that neutrality can be achieved by making sure (a) the study's overall methodology is described in detail, (b) other researchers can follow the sequence of how the data were collected, processed, analyzed, and displayed to draw the conclusions, and (c) the researcher acknowledges his or her biases and personal assumptions and how they can impact the study.

I accomplished the actions Miles et al. (2014) suggested by (a) systematically describing the five levels of data analysis I used and (b) revealing every step of the data collection and data

analysis process so that other readers can follow my research and replicate my work if desired. Another point, as discussed in the previous section on credibility, was that I understood it was impossible to keep biases out of the study. I therefore chose to "bracket" or set aside my personal biases by explicating the rationale for my research decisions in both journals and personal recordings. Disclosing the reasons behind my actions provided me with opportunities to identify, reflect, and determine the extent of my unintended biases. I also realized that part of the bracketing process was to explain my role as researcher and my motivation to pursue this topic.

Role of the Researcher

In complying with AERA Standards (2006), part of my responsibility as the researcher was to identify any potential conflicts of interest or biases that may have influenced my research. This is an important step in the qualitative researcher process because as Lichtman (2013) stated, "reality is constructed through the eyes and ears of the researcher" (p. 21). In other words, all information in this research was influenced by my experiences, knowledge, and background. To ensure I conducted this study with as much transparency as possible, this section includes my background, motivation, and inspiration for this study.

Intrinsic motivation. As far back as I can remember I have been overly competitive. Whether it was sports, school, or games, if I was not on the winning team, I would take it extremely hard. In fact, I can recall times when I did not win a solo or team event and then go off quietly somewhere to cry. I wanted to be the best at everything and my mindset was, "second place is just the first loser." In retrospect, I do not know what created this intense competitive attitude. It could have been that I was firstborn, small for my age, constantly underestimated, or the realization that I looked different from the people I competed against. Regardless of the reason, everything in my life was a competition that I had to win.

Forming years. Although I cannot remember instances of overt discrimination while growing up, I do have memories of being treated differently than my non-Hispanic White classmates. One example that will remain forever etched in my mind occurred the year after President Johnson signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In 1965, I was starting 2nd grade in my mixed Hispanic, African American, and Asian neighborhood school when I was suddenly transferred to an all-White elementary school in a different part of town. The incident in question happened during a class kickball game. During the game, I was at the pitcher's position when a non-minority girl kicked the ball back to me. When I rolled it to first base to get the "out," the girl tripped over the ball and injured herself. Rather than treating it like the accident it was, I was reprimanded in front of my entire class and sent to the principal's office. I did not understand what I did wrong and my parents, who were still learning English, were not able to argue my case. This was my first recollection of feeling degraded and being treated as an inferior person.

Military career. My competitive nature followed me throughout my military career. With only a high school education, I initially enlisted in the Air Force. I found military life challenging, yet rewarding and I excelled quickly, garnering several awards and promotions. After completing a bachelor's degree, I was selected for officer training school. As an officer, I was considered part of the military leadership corps and thrived in the lower to middle level management tiers. My performance was always rated at the highest levels as evidenced by the job evaluations and awards I received throughout the years, culminating in being named the "best in the Air Force" at my particular job.

I continued to strive to be the best, but something happened to me later in my career that prevented me from reaching the senior leadership levels. I discovered many of my peers had developed "career management" skills, in that they carefully planned out their career goals, such

as how long they had to stay in a current job, what job to apply for next, when they needed certain professional development milestones to be met, mentors they should develop relationships with, and so forth. I had no such skills, nor did I think they were important. My philosophy had been to always do the best job possible and take care of my people; it was about performance and results. So, while my peers were out golfing with the boss, attending functions, and volunteering for special projects, I was in the office with the troops ensuring our core mission was met. I also ensured my subordinates received full recognition for our accomplishments. I do not understand why, but I had a very hard time taking credit for work that was accomplished on the backs of the people I was supposed to care for and nurture. On the other hand, during performance evaluation time, the people I competed against had no reservations with embellishing their accomplishments.

Getting left behind. As I became more senior in rank, I began to realize that many of my peers were advancing ahead of me. Individuals who had previously worked for me were getting promoted early and moving into higher-level positions. Even before this research, one thing I noticed was individuals who advanced quickly had mentors or sponsors to help them make career decisions and find jobs with promotion potential. In fact, many of these mentors had established networks that they used to create opportunities for protégés. This type of support was more apparent at the higher levels where validation by senior leadership was required for the key positions leading to upper-level positions. I did not have mentors, networks or other backing, nor did I seek them. I still believed it was about performance, not politics or whom you know. I could not have been more wrong. The people who had developed social and professional relationships were getting promoted into the senior-level positions. Conversely, I was passed over for promotion and left behind. In hindsight, I realize I had not invested in the social capital I

needed to create network resources and connections to draw from later. McGuire's (2000) claim that lack of access to social capital may prevent individuals from gaining access to higher-level positions certainly rang true in my case.

The experiences I encountered during my professional career bring me to this current research and my effort to add to the body of knowledge and help shed light on the topic of Hispanic underrepresentation in senior leadership positions. Perhaps, aspiring Hispanic leaders can identify with my experiences, but instead of repeating my mistakes, they can use the participants' examples to overcome challenges to break through and reach the top levels of their organizations. Also, by presenting my emic perspective on this topic, readers can examine the research from their own points of view, evaluate my conclusions and assumptions, and come up with their own interpretations.

Protection of Human Subjects

The protection of human subjects from exposure to potential harmful consequences was an important consideration during this study. I accomplished this through confidentiality, protection of data, and proper disposition of records. Following Creswell's (2011) guidance, I applied the following the ethical considerations during this study: (a) informing both the participants and gatekeepers of the potential impact of the research, (b) treating the participants with dignity and respect; and (c) making the participants aware that any possible harmful or intimate information disclosed during the interview will be kept confidential and protected.

Ensuring confidentiality. A concern that always remains at the forefront of all research is the probable risk to participants if a breach of confidentiality were to occur. In order to encourage participants to speak openly and honestly, they must be convinced that their identities will not be connected to any information that they provide (Lichtman, 2013). Confidentiality was

maintained through use of pseudonyms, physical protection of interview recordings and participant records, and computer files. Caution was taken to ensure participant names were not used in public discussions, notes, or other correspondence. The interview recordings were transcribed with caution to ensure identifying information was not included in the content.

Protection of data and disposition of records. To comply with Responsible Conduct of Research procedures, all raw data used during this research was stored and archived in a safe and secure manner. After the data analysis process was completed, the transcribed data was transferred to an off-line external hard drive until no longer needed for research purposes. Afterwards, any records with participant information and interview audio recordings will be permanently erased from the hard drive. Subsequent disposition of remaining data will coincide with the university, IRB, and public law requirements.

Chapter Summary

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic men who successfully reached senior leadership positions. The research protocol consisted of open-ended interviews with 10 Hispanic male senior-level leaders. This information was used to provide insights into ways of helping develop future leaders within the Hispanic community.

Participants were recruited from a major metropolitan area in the southwestern United States and initial contact was made through professional business associations, colleges and universities, and gatekeepers within government agencies and the military. The participants were selected from designated locations and snowball sampling was used to identify additional participants. The participants were protected through strict adherence to the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board and the use of an ethical approach, confidentiality, protection of data, and proper disposition of records.

The interviews were recorded with a target timeframe of between 60 to 90 minutes per interview session and consisted of open-ended questions, and included follow-up and probing questions as necessary. The data was analyzed using Spradley's (1979) Development Research Sequence (DRS). This approach consisted of five levels of analysis (a) analyzing participant responses, (b) transcribing as analysis, (c) identifying key ideas, (d) domain analysis, and (e) taxonomic analysis.

The DRS analysis process resulted in the identification of 39 key ideas, 12 relevant terms, 7 domains, and 3 taxonomies. Trustworthiness of the research was maintained through the application of Guba's (1981) four principles for ensuring trustworthiness in qualitative research (a) credibility, (b) dependability, (c) transferability, and (d) confirmability and Merriam's (2002) guidelines for assessing the "quality" in qualitative research.

Chapter 4: Findings

In this chapter I present the findings from the data analyses of in-depth interviews conducted with 10 Hispanic male senior leaders. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic men who successfully reached senior leadership positions. The findings of the study were determined by applying Spradley's (1979) Development Research Sequence (DRS) to the interview transcript data. The use of this analysis method provided a systematic method to construct meanings from participant experiences as described in their own words, which were transcribed from face-to-face interviews. The remainder of this chapter describes analyses and findings constructed through domain and taxonomic analyses that contributed to the overall study results.

As described in Chapter 3: Methodology, once all the interviews were transcribed, I used Spradley's (1979) DRS approach to make the domain analysis. After analyzing the interview transcripts, I identified seven domains relevant to the purpose of the study and that addressed the research questions: (1) encountering structural disadvantages, (2) having role models, (3) capitalizing on opportunities, (4) being intrinsically driven, (5) knowing how to lead, (6) understanding the importance of mentors, and (7) belonging to a network. I conducted further analyses on these seven domains to identify the three taxonomies of (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships. These three taxonomies reflect the essence of what made these participants successful and constitute the main substance of my findings. As explained previously, Spradley defined a domain as the overall term given to a symbolic category and a taxonomic analysis as an in-depth study used to explain the interrelationships among domains.

Domains

This section presents an overview of the seven domains identified during the domain analysis process and participant comments supporting selection of those domains.

Encountering structural disadvantages domain. One of the first domains I developed, and one that is a major component of my overall research questions referencing barriers, is the encountering structural disadvantages domain. During the interviews, the participants discussed challenges they had to overcome to reach leadership positions. These events arose from what Padilla and Perez (2003) described as the cultural environment in which they were raised and the social stigma associated with the Hispanic identity by the dominant group. I identified the following examples of the encountering structural disadvantages domain through the domain analysis: (a) *raised in low socioeconomic conditions*, (b) *grew up in Spanish speaking environments*, and (c) *exposure to discrimination*. Most of the participants required little or no encouragement to talk about the roadblocks they encountered on their way to becoming senior leaders. The included terms and semantic relationship that makes up the encountering structural disadvantages domain is shown at Table 10.

Table 10

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Encountering Structural Disadvantages Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
Raised in low socioeconomic conditions	is a kind of →	Encountering Structural Disadvantages
Grew up in Spanish speaking environments		
Exposure to discrimination		

Structural disadvantage one: Raised in low socioeconomic conditions. The first disadvantage I discovered among the participant interviews was that 8 of the 10 individuals grew up in low socioeconomic environments. As revealed in Chapter 3: Methodology, Alex, the military leader, described his childhood experiences growing up in poverty and dreaming of someday escaping it. In addition, Carlos, a 35-year-career federal service leader, said:

> Going to school was tough after dad left the military. We became migrant workers to make ends meet. It was hard. I later realized that is why a lot Hispanic kids I knew weren't going to college because they felt obligated to help their families.

Carlos identified the challenges he faced while attending school in a U.S./Mexican border town and found himself academically behind his non-Hispanic peers because he had to leave school early every spring to harvest crops. However, he recognized that he had to work harder to keep up in school and he wanted to go to college. He added that he later realized he needed to improve his academic skills to remain competitive which provided the motivation that pushed him to eventually succeed—a theme that I will develop further in the later discussion of the being intrinsically motivated domain.

Eduardo, an executive at a non-profit, also added:

> I grew up in a single parent household and my mom worked several jobs to make sure we had what we needed. I even got a job at 13 years of age just to help out. I lied on the application and told them I was 16. My job was to strip and buff floors from 6:00 p.m. to 2:00 a.m. every night; it was rough man.

Growing up in a single parent household had a major influence on Eduardo's life. He talked about his personal responsibility to earn income for his family at a very young age. He also discussed his goals to join the military to help provide a future for his family.

Hector, a civilian leader in the Department of Defense, recalled his early memories of the difficulties he faced during his childhood:

> We were raised as migrant workers. There were many families, including my own, that would leave school early every year to travel north to work the fields. I did this throughout my teenage years to help provide income for my family.

Like Carlos, Hector's parents were migrant workers who moved from place to place to follow the seasonal work. School became secondary for Hector and families like his who needed income just to pay for the basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing. Growing up in poverty put the participants at a disadvantage early in life. The participants did find ways to pay for higher education, but as Carlos and Hector pointed out, they and many other families had to help earn income for their households before they could consider spending money on college.

Structural disadvantage two: Growing up in Spanish speaking environment. A second aspect of the encountering structural disadvantages domain was that 8 of the 10 participants grew up in environments where Spanish was the primary language, which led to challenges for them later in life. For example, a study by the Newlink Group (2011) revealed that one of the keys to advancement for Hispanics in the U.S. workplace is English language proficiency. Julian, president and CEO of a non-profit organization, recalled his struggle to learn English:

> When I came to this country, I had to learn English from scratch because back in in Mexico, as I was going through high school and college, the fashionable thing was to learn French. Of course, I never thought that I would eventually settle in the U.S.

Although all participants, except Julian, were born in the United States and they lived in predominately Hispanic neighborhoods where everyone spoke Spanish. This environment impeded their English language proficiency because as soon as they departed the school grounds, they returned to speaking Spanish, as illustrated by this quotation from Alex the military leader:

> Back in grade school, 99 percent of the students spoke primarily Spanish because there was no requirement to speak English in the classroom. The teachers tried to get us to speak English but as soon as we left, we reverted back to our native language.

Alex's comments reflect his awareness that achieving English language competence is a daunting task for Hispanics because of the environment in which they are raised. He also mentioned that as a young boy, he was encouraged and influenced by his parents to focus on English because all the influential people they knew were skilled in English. Alex remarked that his decision to become proficient in English was one of the factors that helped him achieve success in the United States Army.

Hector, the Department of Defense employee, also talked about language difficulties. He indicated that growing up not speaking English was an obstacle that put him at a disadvantage in the classroom:

> My primary language when I grew up was Spanish so there was a lack of communication in school. They didn't speak Spanish and I didn't speak English. It was one of the worst hurdles I ever faced because I wasn't able to keep up with the students who already spoke English so I fell behind in my studies.

Carlos, the federal service leader, further described the challenges of growing up in a Spanish-speaking environment, while also tying it to the lack of educational opportunities related to the previous discussion of low socioeconomic status as a structural disadvantage:

> I grew up in a border town where school districts weren't so good. I had to work hard to catch up because I didn't have basic communication skills. It took time because we spoke Spanish at home and didn't have the experience like other kids growing up in strictly English dominant households.

Hector and Carlos provided additional examples of participants who overcame language difficulties in order to succeed in the U.S. Their perspectives also revealed some of the challenges Hispanics encounter when growing up in low socioeconomic, Spanish-speaking environments.

Benjamin, a university dean, was the participant who articulated the most subtle aspect of the relationship between growing up speaking only Spanish, surrounded by other Hispanic individuals, while living under low socioeconomic conditions:

> I grew up in the Southside of the city just a few blocks from here and I thought only Mexicans were poor. Why? Because that is all I ever saw, but when I got to college I saw other groups who were just as poor and I realized that there were other people who were also not as fortunate.

While other participants described the specific challenges that not knowing English created, Benjamin instead tied the cultural aspect of only speaking—and being around—other Spanish speakers with his economic conditions and how that limited his perceptions of the wider world. Because Benjamin grew up in a predominantly Hispanic neighborhood, he never understood what lay beyond his small community until he went to college. His remark that he believed only Mexicans were poor reflects how some ethnic minority groups can become isolated from the majority culture in the United States. Lichter, Parisi, and Taquino (2015) assert that native-born Hispanics are not integrating with native-born Whites because they have not fully assimilated into American society and remain apart on many important issues such as education, income, and English language usage. Alex, Hector, and Carlos' comments about primarily speaking Spanish in their neighborhoods demonstrate that members of Hispanic communities, such as the ones they were raised in, remain engaged in their native language and customs and have difficulties assimilating into mainstream American culture while immersed in that environment.

Structural disadvantage three: Exposure to discrimination. A third structural disadvantage shared among half of the participants was exposure to discrimination. The participants understood that some of the difficulties they faced resulted from their cultural background, but it only motivated them to work harder. Carlos, the 35-year-career federal service leader, said:

> As a young boy in elementary and junior high school, I noticed right away that as a minority, I was treated differently and it was quite obvious that we would be singled out at times. I certainly feel that being Hispanic was one of the things that didn't allow me to move up the ladder as easily as being non-Hispanic.

Carlos realized early in life that he was treated differently than his non-Hispanic peers. Although his perspective came from his own personal experiences, it formed his understanding of discrimination at a young age. The perception that his ethnicity was a barrier remained with him later in his life as he competed for jobs with non-Hispanics.

Alex remarked how his exposure to discrimination motivated him to compete at a higher level as he stated:

> Discrimination was much more prevalent when I entered the military back in the 1970s. All it did was motivate me to try harder because I refused to concede.
> I refused to believe I was not as good as other people because of my background.

Alex mentioned how the discrimination he encountered during his early career was much more evident than in present times. However, he refused to accept the fact that because of who he was, he was not as good as others and his experiences with discrimination only motivated him to work harder to achieve success.

However, some respondents did not experience explicit biases because of their cultural background. Ismael, the college president, described his experiences with subtle forms of racism:

> There were a couple of subtle things, you know, some kinds of subtle racism that was occasional but it wasn't a pattern or repeated or anything. I think even at my current level, I do see some barriers. Sometimes they are subtle such as I notice slight differences in how I am treated versus how an Anglo colleague is treated.

Ismael did not experience overt discrimination as some of the other participants did, but did perceive occurrences of subtle racism throughout his career. Although the discrimination was not explicit, Ismael confided that the specific behavior made him feel uncomfortable. He added that

even in his current position as a college president, he is able to sense the subtle nuances in how he is treated compared to his non-Hispanic peers.

While most of the participants spoke about encountering structural disadvantages, not all participants were as quick to discuss the disadvantages, especially in racial terms. For instance, Daniel, whose father was Hispanic and mother non-Hispanic White, never considered ethnicity or race as a problem during his career and he believed people should be evaluated by their accomplishments, not their culture. He never considered his background a disadvantage and contended that race should never be an issue because only skills and capabilities matter in the corporate world. Still, 9 out of the 10 interview respondents were aware of how their Hispanic background exacerbated structural inequalities.

Existing literature predicted many of the barriers the participants talked about. Mundra et al. (2003) described the number of challenges ethnic minorities have faced during their climb to senior leadership positions, such as human capital, language, and economic challenges. Kay and Gorman (2012) asserted that obstacles originate from both external environments out of an individual's control, such as discrimination and stereotyping, and from internal sources like poor career planning or inadequate skill preparation. My interviews suggest that these internal barriers may still be linked to structural factors; for example, the participants' descriptions of their childhoods suggest that growing up in low socioeconomic conditions means they had little chance to develop career planning skills. The literature and my research participants revealed that Hispanic individuals must overcome multiple barriers before they can reach full potential.

Having role models domain. The second domain I identified through the domain analysis was having role models. Family relations strongly influenced the participants' early lives growing up. These family members became their role models and instilled specific values

about responsibility, work ethic, values, and the importance of education. In every case, the participants' role models were not corporate presidents, executives, or CEOs. Instead, the participants described their role models as humble, hard-working, average people who influenced, sacrificed, and set an example for the participants to help develop them into the leaders they are today. I identified the following examples of role models through the domain analysis: (a) *elder brothers and parents*, (b) *parents who sacrificed and set an example*, (c) *mother who pushed to go to school*, and (d) *grandfather who provided a strong example*. The included terms and semantic relationship that make up the having role models domain is shown at Table 11.

Table 11

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Having Role Models Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
Elder brothers and parents		
Parents who sacrificed and set an example	is a kind of →	Having Role Models
Mother who pushed to go to school		
Grandfather who provided a strong example		

The first statement about role models comes from Alex, the military leader who grew up in a poor border town. He discussed the role models who had the most influence on him in his early years:

> Early on, my role models were my elder brothers and parents. One brother had served in the military and was still serving in the reserves. The other one was on active duty. They became my role models for how I might be able to serve my country and escape poverty. From my father, I learned if you tell someone you are going to do something, you'd better do it because your word is your bond, and my mother engrained in me to always tell the truth.

Alex's family set a positive example of duty during his forming years and instilled a clear set of values in him that Alex believed facilitated his professional development. Those principles of

keeping his word and telling the truth were engrained in Alex and remained with him throughout his career.

Benjamin, the university dean, provided the following comments about the role models who influenced him the most:

> It was my parents who really influenced me. They sacrificed a lot to send me to catholic schools and they did a lot to set the example for my brother and me. I owe them everything because they laid the groundwork in regards to establishing a foundation on the academic side and developing the entire person that I am.

Benjamin's primary role models were his parents. He reflected on how his parents set an example by sacrificing their way of life to provide opportunities for their children. What little money they had was used to send Benjamin and his brother to good schools, which also reinforced to Benjamin the importance of education.

Carlos, the 35-year-career federal service leader, who also grew up in a border town, discussed the important role his family played in his decision to go to college:

> Eighty percent of the kids who graduated from my high school did not go to college and I would have been one of them had my mother not preached the fact that school was important. Attending college was basically a testament to my mom's insistence that we continue our education. She was my hero. Even though she was not formally educated and only had a 6th grade education, she had the knowledge and understanding that you needed an education to get ahead.

These comments reflect the admiration Carlos had for his mother and the influence she made in his life. Although Carlos' mother did not progress beyond primary school, she had impressed upon her children the belief that a formal education was required in order to become successful in the United States.

Frederick, the Fortune 500 company executive who was raised in a single parent household, also talked about his role models. It was immediately evident the important role his family, especially his grandfather, played in his development as a leader:

> We really stayed together as a family and our mom always pushed us to do more. I used to spend my summers at my grandparents and helped my grandfather who I would consider my role model. I always respected that my grandfather had a stable job. He worked hard and he got rewarded. I always knew that when I grew up, I wanted to have that kind of stability.

While Frederick's mother motivated him to work hard, his grandfather provided a strong example of a male role model and instilled in Frederick a sense of responsibility and desire for stability. Later, while spending the summers working at his grandfather's store, Frederick developed a sense for business and people skills; he recalled:

> I decided that I wanted to pursue a career in business from working at my grandfather's jewelry store after school and during my summer breaks. I learned how to really converse with adults, develop relationships, build rapport, as well as inventory and balancing the books, and I was only 16 years old at the time.

Frederick's grandfather was the greatest inspiration in his life; by example, he taught him to believe in himself and inspired him to pursue the current path that led to his success. He commented, "I have a picture of my grandpa on my desk to constantly remind me of everything he did for me. I am who I am today because of his influence and the life lessons he taught me."

Most of the discussion of role models up to this point has been related to learning a value that was useful for later work like the importance of duty, working hard, and being honest, or being put on a specific education path such as with Benjamin and Carlos. For Frederick, it was another type of role model influence: providing concrete education in the form of business and people skills. So, role models, who were largely family members, improved the chances for participants' success by instilling specific values, including a belief in the importance of education, or showing that sacrifice was necessary to overcome challenges that helped the participants thrive. In Frederick's case, his grandfather also directly provided him with opportunities to learn, which led to the identification of the next domain.

Capitalizing on opportunities domain. From role models and other people who influenced them during their careers, the participants learned to actively seek out and take advantage of opportunities, which led to the identification of the capitalizing on opportunities as the third domain. In some cases, the participants took risks to follow opportunities, but those gambles paid off by allowing the participants to demonstrate their capabilities. I identified the following example of the capitalizing on opportunities domain through the domain analysis: (a) *asked to prepare the entire state for bilingual special education*, (b) *volunteered to help an executive with new software*, (c) *offered continuing education and development courses*, and (d) *supervised a group of older seasoned employees*. The included terms and semantic relationship that make up the capitalizing on opportunities domain is shown at Table 12.

Table 12

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Capitalizing on Opportunities Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
Asked to prepare the entire state for bilingual special education	is a kind of →	Capitalizing on Opportunities
Volunteered to help an executive with new software		
Offered continuing education and development courses		
Supervised a group of older seasoned employees		

Benjamin described the opportunities given to him early in his career that he capitalized on. He recalled, "One thing that helped me advance in my career was that whenever leadership training was made available, I would take it." He also added:

> Be the one to volunteer for extra things, say you will do it. You may not get paid any more, but do it; such as when I got a call from a school district in Arkansas that increased from 300 Latino students to 5,000 in one year. They asked me to go there and prepare the entire state for bilingual special education so I jumped on it.

The risk Benjamin took volunteering for the Arkansas teaching opportunity paid dividends for him. He became an expert in the area of training bilingual teachers and his guidance to implement bilingual programs was requested by other states with fast growing Hispanic populations. Taking advantage of an opportunity early in his career enabled him to develop expertise in his field and become a leader who can make a broad impact on the groups and communities in which he works.

Frederick, the Fortune 500 executive inspired by his grandfather, provided another illustration of capitalizing on opportunities when he recalled his first big break:

> I was delivering mail to a senior executive at AT&T and I could sense the frustration on her face because she was working in a system called Windows 95, which is an old system now but back then it was state-of-the-art. I told the executive I had learned it in school and volunteered to help her if she needed it. She then called my boss in the mailroom and told him she was going to borrow me for a little while, but I never went back to the mailroom, ever.

Frederick's comments reflect how he was able benefit from the opportunity that was created because of his willingness to volunteer his specialized skills. He later added that when word got around about his computer expertise, his reputation in the organization began to grow. Soon, at a very young age, he was working on projects for top executives and was being recruited by other prominent firms.

Hector, the Department of Defense senior leader, spoke of the opportunities provided to him when he transition from the military to federal service work:

> It wasn't until about ten years later that I came into federal civil service and was offered a lot of continuing education and development courses. I mean, the government paid for my master's, as well as a lot of other training that has helped me to compete. It is really amazing that I was offered those opportunities.

Hector described the educational and development opportunities offered to him in the federal government. He was grateful for the opportunities and took advantage of them, but he expressed concern that other ethnic minorities may not be capitalizing on those benefits.

Besides opening doors for greater advancement, the capitalizing on opportunities domain also provided participants with opportunities to learn valuable lessons. For example, Gabriel, director of a local federal agency, spoke of his experiences as a new supervisor:

> When I was in my 30s I became a supervisor and was placed in charge of a group of people who were about 15 years my senior. I had gotten promoted and as the program manager, I had to supervise this group of older seasoned employees. Unfortunately, I failed but I learned a valuable lesson. I realized what I did wrong. As a leader, I needed to communicate more clearly. I wasn't an active listener and didn't believe in the staff. I thought they were just old and ready to retire.

Gabriel discussed this example from his career about being given an opportunity to supervise for the first time in his life. Although he was not successful, he was able to learn from the experience, which prepared him for his next leadership opportunity.

The participants succeeded largely because of three things I uncovered through this domain analysis: (a) they identified opportunities that arose, (b) they had the skills or capacities to take advantage of the opportunities, and (c) they took action to pursue those opportunities. Whether it was relocating to another state for a new job or volunteering for additional training, the participants readily accepted the challenges. By capitalizing on the opportunities provided to them, the participants demonstrated to organizational leaders that they had the potential for challenging assignments and increased leadership responsibilities.

Being intrinsically driven domain. A common characteristic among all participants was their determination to work hard, compete, and succeed. Each was intrinsically driven to perform at his best regardless of the task, and they used this drive to overcome difficulties they encountered. As a result, being intrinsically driven was identified as the fourth domain. From the

analysis of interview transcripts, I uncovered the following examples of participants being intrinsically driven through the domain analysis: (a) *I completed as many as I could so there would be no questions*, (b) *I pushed extremely hard to catch up*, (c) *I've never liked to lose*, and (d) *I refused to fail so I never had any problems with academics*. The included terms and semantic relationship that constitutes the being intrinsically driven domain is shown in Table 13.

Table 13

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Being Intrinsically Driven Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
I completed as many as I could so there would be no questions	is a kind of →	Being Intrinsically Driven
I pushed extremely hard to catch up		
I've never liked to lose		
I refused to fail so I never had any problems with academics		

The first comment was from Benjamin who was intrinsically driven to perform at his best and recalled how his early supervisors did not give him career advice or mentor him on what was needed to advance. He remarked:

> The semester before I was going for promotion and tenure, I was told, "if you don't have two more publications in press we are not going to support you." I then thought to myself, this is April I go up for promotion in August and they are just telling me now? I had five years that they should have been telling me this. So what did I do? I not only got two, but I submitted eight publications in four months. I completed as many as I could so there would be no questions.

Benjamin was disappointed that he had not been told about the promotion requirements sooner, but he realized he needed to exceed the standard in order to get promoted. Rather than capitulate or give excuses, Benjamin demonstrated his drive and determination to prove that he deserved to be promoted.

Daniel, the executive at a privately held firm, was very driven to catch up with his peers during his first corporate job. He commented:

> As I got into my first corporate job, I found myself a few years behind my peers so I pushed extremely hard to catch up. I was also driven to catch up to people who were my age and I found that I learned a lot of really good skills that helped me during the rest of my career.

Because of the late start in his career, Daniel was driven to work extra hard to catch up with his peers. His drive and leadership skills were important factors that helped him progress in his career and enabled him to reach the senior leadership levels.

Eduardo, an executive at a non-profit who grew up in a single-parent household, was also very driven as evidenced by his comment:

> I always had that thing about me that I've never liked to lose. It is not necessarily competition but I have always been very driven. Coming in second is fine, as long as I know that I gave my best and tried everything that I could to win.

Eduardo described his strong desire to compete and win. Although driven to be the best, he accepted the fact that he did not always have to win, as long as he knew he gave his best effort.

Julian, president and CEO of a non-profit organization, described his competitive spirit and how he strived to always give his best, particularly during his studies:

> I was raised in a small town in Mexico that didn't have a school. When I was young, another family offered to take me to a bigger town to get educated and didn't charge my family a penny. I never wanted to disappoint my family so I worked really hard in college and I refused to fail so I never had any problems with academics.

Julian excelled during his college career. He credits his academic achievement to not wanting to disappoint his parents and waste the opportunity he was given when, as a child, he departed his small town with another family to pursue an education. Consequently, his effort, determination, and will to succeed pushed him through every academic program, culminating in his completion

of a doctoral degree. Julian's inherent drive to always give his best helped him achieve senior leader status.

All the participants were self-motivated and possessed an intrinsic drive to be the best at whatever they set their mind to; thus, supporting the being intrinsically driven domain. Although the scope of this research did not examine reasons why the participants possessed this quality, or where it came from, their drive was a contributing factor in helping them overcome challenges and reach the top leadership levels in their fields.

Knowing how to lead domain. Another characteristic among participants in this study was that all of them were successful in leading organizations to achieve goals. From an analysis of interview transcripts, I discovered that each participant had the ability to inspire, influence, and motivate their employees, which according to Nahavandi (2012) is a form of transformational leadership. The participants also had learned the benefits of hiring quality people, taking care of them, and valuing their contributions. As a result, I identified knowing how to lead as the fifth domain. Through the domain analysis I discovered the following participant examples of knowing how to lead: (a) *enable, hold accountable, and resource subordinates*, (b) *ability to convince people to do what you want them to do*, (c) *hire people who are better than me*, and (d) *do well by people, take care of them and they will take care of you*. The included terms and semantic relationship making up the domain is shown at Table 14.

Table 14

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Knowing How to Lead Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
Enable, hold accountable, and resource subordinates	is a kind of →	Knowing How to Lead
Ability to convince people to do what you want them to do		
Hire people better who are better than me		
Do well by your people, take care of them and they will take care of you		

The first example of the knowing how to lead domain came from Alex's account of his forming years in college ROTC and his early career in the Army, where leadership became an important influence in his life. He commented:

> If you are a leader in any kind of environment, you are not the sole reason for success. If you are supervising or leading anybody, your whole team has to be successful and your subordinates are the ones who make you successful because if they fail, you fail. Your responsibility becomes to enable them, hold them accountable, and ensure they are properly resourced. The greatest legacy we can leave behind is that we have influenced and touched those that come after us and they grow up to be superb leaders or managers and have great success.

In describing his journey through the military officer ranks, Alex asserted that leaders could only succeed through the efforts of their teams. In addition, he believes successful leaders must provide subordinates with the tools needed to accomplish the mission and, above all, care for them. Finally, Alex spoke of a leader's responsibility to influence other promising achievers.

Eduardo, the non-profit corporate executive, never considered himself a leader but later realized he had the capacity to lead while in the military. Eduardo's military experiences allowed him to discover his ability to motivate and lead people, but it was also his people and communication skills that helped him develop as a leader as evidenced by his comment:

> I always knew I was very personable, but I didn't realize that I had the ability to actually convince people to do what I wanted them to do. For example, just to get them to open up their business doors and say, "hey, come on in and have a blood drive; bring a bus or set up in the conference room."

Eduardo discovered he had a talent to inspire and influence people, which are the major characteristics of leadership (Nahavandi, 2012). In addition, he accepted his role as a leader and used his skills to expand his organization into a market leader in his industry.

Gabriel, the local federal agency director, transitioned from the military to civilian life, and identified himself as a novice in his new job based on initially not knowing a lot about business. However, he stated he was familiar with the aspects of leading people:

> When I came into civil service, I didn't understand a lot about business or dealing with a lot of people, but I knew how to lead. I always like to hire people who are better than me. I was not scared of those things. A lot of people are, but I think that is part of the old way of thinking.

Gabriel never felt threatened to lead outside the norms or bring in new talent. He revealed that during high-level meetings, he was not afraid to ask detailed questions to make sure, that as a leader, he had the information he needed to make informed decisions. He also discussed his approach to hiring new staff. Although some of his peers may have felt threatened hiring people with high credentials, Gabriel was not intimidated and wanted to make sure he surrounded himself with skilled people to benefit the organization.

Julian, the president and CEO of a private organization supporting Hispanic education, spent much of the interview on the topic of leadership. Julian spoke in-depth about his passion for leadership as he recalled:

> I think it is really important that as leaders, we try to do the best that we can and do well by others especially those who are part of your responsibility to lead, so to speak. Do well by your people, take care of them and they will take care of you.

Like Alex, Julian asserted that people are the most valuable asset of any organization and taking care of them is an important part of leadership. He commented that having this leadership philosophy was a big factor in helping him overcome barriers and rise to his current position as the President and CEO of his current organization.

From the knowing how to lead domain, I identified the participants' leadership philosophies and qualities that remained with them throughout their lives. I also learned the significance that each leader placed on valuing and supporting employees during their careers. They surrounded themselves with good people and took care of them. The knowing how to lead domain also reflected connections to the capitalizing on opportunities domain in that participants were given opportunities to step into leadership positions and they willingly accepted those roles, leading to their eventual success.

Understanding the importance of mentors domain. Another common theme among these leaders was the role that mentors played in their careers. Initially, the participants in this study lacked mentoring to teach them the social, political, and academic skills they may not have learned because of the environment in which they were raised. Carlos, the 35-year-career federal service leader, said that Department of Defense mentoring programs were supposed to match supervisors with mentors, but no one took it seriously and it was "more lip service than anything else." He also said:

> I think the primary barrier was the fact that we didn't have any mentors on either the general's council or board, whether you were Hispanic or African American. There weren't any mentors for us so we would find mentors by accident. For example, I met mine while at a base function. I was introduced to him and I told him what I did. The next thing I know, we made an appointment to meet and talk.

Carlos described the attempt by his organization to establish mentoring programs for ethnic minorities. While the initiative was admirable, Carlos indicated the organization's leadership did

not support the program so it became a token gesture. Instead, Carlos met his mentor by sheer serendipity. This mentor helped Carlos transition to the acquisition and budgeting career field, creating new job and promotion opportunities for him.

Daniel, an executive at a privately held firm, did not gain access to a mentor until later in his career, which he believes held him back to some extent. He said:

> I think if I were to do anything differently it would have been to find a mentor sooner in my career. Maybe there were life lessons that I made along the way that I would not have repeated, maybe a mistake or two because everyone makes mistakes, but I think there were ways I could have avoided some of those pitfalls.

Daniel talked about the value that mentors have brought to his life. However, because he did not find a mentor until later in his career, he made mistakes he believes could have been avoided had he established a mentoring relationship sooner. He recognized that making mistakes allowed him to gain experience and grow, but he would have preferred to minimize the number of missteps he had to take to get to his current position.

Similarly, Eduardo, the non-profit executive, recalled his missed mentoring opportunities and the struggles he experienced:

> Thinking back, the biggest thing that I would have wanted would have been somebody to mentor me sooner because I think I could have avoided a lot of land mines. I learned some tough lessons. I didn't know there was help out there. I thought I had to do everything on my own because that is the way I always did things. I wish I would have known somebody who would have said, "hey man you should probably not do this, let me show you the right way."

Like Daniel, without mentors in his early career, Eduardo had to learn hard lessons on his own. He struggled and made mistakes along the way, not realizing people were available to help him had he sought them out. Although he reached the senior leader ranks, he commented that without the help of mentors, it took him much longer to get to the executive levels than his peers. These comments revealed that many of the participants lacked mentors to help them plan a successful

career path. Even though the participants reached the senior leadership levels, many of them struggled because without a mentor they did not know how to navigate through unique challenges, unfamiliar territory, and key career decisions; thus, they learned the importance of having a mentor.

As a result, understanding the importance of mentors became the sixth domain. Each participant needed mentoring to reach the senior levels, but 7 of the 10 did not connect with a mentor until later in their careers. The data revealed that three of participants were proactive in seeking mentors, while the other seven let the relationships develop organically. I identified the following examples of the participants understanding the importance of mentors through the domain analysis: (a) *find someone who understands you and is willing to help and encourage you*, (b) *I was hoping to find someone to show me the ropes*, (c) *try to cultivate relationships with diverse leaders*, and (d) *he took me under his wing and placed me on the career track that helped get me where I am today*. The included terms and semantic relationship that make up the understanding the importance of mentors domain is shown at Table 15.

Table 15

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Understanding the Importance of Mentors Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
Find someone who understands you and is willing to help and encourage you	is a kind of →	Understanding the Importance of Mentors
I was hoping to find someone to show me the ropes		
Try to cultivate relationships with diverse leaders		
He took me under his wing and placed me on the career track that helped get me where I am today		

The first comments initiating the ideas for the domain came from Alex. Even though he reached the top levels of the U.S. military hierarchy, he did not have a mentor to guide him until late in his career. He spoke about the importance of mentors in general:

> You don't succeed alone and it is important in any profession to seek out mentors. When looking for a mentor, you are hoping to find someone who understands you and is willing to help and encourage you. For me it was very difficult and I never had anyone that I could call a mentor until late in my career.

Although Alex did not have a mentoring relationship until he was already established in his career, he recalled that he did not expect to advance much further until a high-ranking military leader took Alex under his wing and provided the guidance he needed to ascend into the elite levels of the Army. This experience made Alex understand the impact a mentor could have on an individual's career and that people do not succeed without help.

Benjamin also did not have a formal mentor until later in his career but now realizes how beneficial mentoring can be if used properly:

> When I got into higher education as an assistant professor, I was hoping to find someone to show me the ropes. We were assigned mentors from the faculty, but unfortunately I never met with any of them. Now, you see the people who were mentored the right way. They come in and negotiate. They want a course assignment, a teaching assistant, a lab, etc. They come in already knowing the game and before you know it, they are being recruited somewhere else.

Benjamin described his experiences with mentoring and the benefits it can bring. However, he also recalled the difficult lessons he had to learn early in his career when he struggled without a mentor. Now, in his role as a senior leader, he is able to see firsthand the impact mentoring has on people and the advantages it can provide.

College president Ismael was the first participant to discuss the importance of cross-cultural mentoring:

> It has been really helpful for me to have both Latino and non-Latino mentors and it is good for emerging Latinos to understand that and to try to cultivate relationships with diverse leaders because each person brings a unique vantage point based upon their personal experience.

Ismael mentioned that he learned the importance of developing diverse mentors in order to give him different perspectives, greater visibility in the field, and expanded networks and opportunities. While seven of the participants waited for mentoring relationships to develop gradually, Ismael looked for opportunities to connect with mentors through what he called "inviting himself to the party." In other words, whenever his supervisor attended management meetings, Ismael would ask to accompany him. This strategy enabled Ismael to meet many influential leaders throughout the organization. These meetings also exposed Ismael to leaders from diverse cultures. As a result, he was able to connect with mentors from multicultural backgrounds who provided him with a broad range of support.

On the other hand, Gabriel's experience was a departure from the norm. He did not have problems with seeking mentors and established networks early in his career. These mentors realized his potential and helped him make key career decisions. He said:

> I went into the office and introduced myself. My boss looked me in the eye and said, "hey I like you and I am going to make you an economic development specialist because you are bright, you have common sense, and all these old guys over here are full of bad habits." And then he took me under his wing and placed me on the career track that helped get me where I am today.

It appeared that Gabriel's mentors recognized the potential in him. Gabriel did not elaborate why people were willing to help him, but he used those occasions to establish relationships with mentors who provided advice and guidance throughout his career.

The understanding the importance of mentors domain revealed that 7 of the 10 participants had difficulty establishing a mentoring relationship until later in their careers. In particular, analysis of the interview transcripts provided insight into the benefits gained by the

participants once they connected with a mentor. In some cases, until they gained access to mentors, participants had to learn difficult lessons on their own. One participant mentioned he reached a plateau in his career, but mentoring provided him with the insight he needed to overcome obstacles and advance into the senior leader levels. Although Gabriel's experience with mentors deviated from most other participants, his situation revealed that mentors will seek mentees when they determine an individual has the potential or has demonstrated performance worth the investment of their time.

Belonging to a network domain. Another factor that helped the participants during their careers was that they became members of effective networks that created job and promotion opportunities. Therefore, belonging to a network was identified as the seventh and final domain. From the participants' perspective, inclusion into a network had a positive impact on career progression. Through these networks, participants received support from shared networks and access to information on job opportunities, as well as advice and mentorship. Through the domain analysis, I identified the following examples of the belonging to a network domain: (a) *I belong to a group of individuals who have been very supportive*, (b) *I didn't box myself in by race which allowed me to join the broad networks I needed for career progression*, (c) *I worked hard and eventually learned how to develop relationships with influential groups at the Pentagon*, (d) *I would hang out in a bar, meet all the movers and shakers and the next thing you know, I am playing golf with CEOs and we are doing business*, and (e) *we played baseball in the mall and afterwards we would go have a beer and talk business*. The included terms and semantic relationship that makes up the belonging to a network domain is shown at Table 16.

Table 16

Included Terms and Semantic Relationship for the Belonging to a Network Domain

Included Terms	Semantic Relationship	Domain
I belong to a group of individuals who have been very supportive		
I didn't box myself in by race which allowed me to join broad networks I needed for career progression		Belonging to a Network
I worked hard and eventually learned how to develop relationships with influential groups at the Pentagon	is a kind of →	
I would hang out in a bar, meet all the movers and shakers and the next thing you know, I am playing golf with CEOs and we are doing business		
We played baseball in the mall and afterwards we would go have a beer and talk business		

Benjamin, a university dean, talked about the significance that networking played in his career. He remarked:

> I belong to a group of individuals who have been very supportive and are in higher positions than I am. If my mentors can't help me, they will contact the group of experts I need and inform them that I will be getting in touch with them.

Benjamin was able to establish an extensive network of high-ranking, supportive mentors who were willing to assist him. In fact, his contacts extend beyond his internal group to include experts from outside sources, allowing him access to a much broader network.

Daniel, the private firm executive, gave his views on networking:

> Networking is incredibly important. I didn't box myself in by race, which allowed me to join the broad networks I needed for career progression. I have a consulting network, a corporate network, and another network with people I have established through my professional relationships and it has helped me in my career. If you want to grow, you need quality networks with diverse people who have been successful, and people who you have built trusted relationships with.

Daniel is a strong advocate of networking and understands the importance of establishing professional relationships. He said he did not consider race a factor when determining the

composition of his network members, which he claimed allowed him to create a diverse group of contacts and networks. Like Ismael, Daniel was able to develop cross-cultural relationships enabling him to gain access to broader perspectives within his network.

While Daniel expressed the need for developing diverse networks, Carlos explicitly connected being Hispanic to having difficulties networking. He also commented on having to work hard to learn how to network:

> The barriers for civil servants, especially Hispanics, are if you are not part of a clique, you are never going to get good jobs…networking is necessary but I didn't do it very well because most minorities didn't have access to mentors to teach you how. But, I worked hard and eventually learned how to develop relationships with influential groups at the Pentagon.

Carlos' experiences with networking provided a different point of view than previous participants. He believed that exclusion from a particular group prevented him from being part of a network and getting good jobs. On the other hand, he also described his perceptions of unequal treatment as he witnessed less qualified individuals move up faster than him because of their social connections. He stated, "if you do have skills in the Department of Defense you can get ahead, but we all know of people who don't have the skills; they have minimal skills but they have the right connections." Although Carlos initially considered networking a means of exclusion for some groups, he learned how to use it to his advantage later in his life. For example, he said: "Once I got to the Pentagon, I began to make connections with important people in my career field. I proved to these leaders that I was a team player they could depend on and it helped get me promoted."

Eduardo, the non-profit organization executive, had an ability to connect with people, which helped him create networking opportunities. He remarked:

> When I would go to a conference, the first thing I would do is introduce myself to somebody. My network is the biggest asset that I have right now. I would hang out in a bar, meet all the movers and shakers and the next thing you know, I am playing golf with three CEOs and we are doing business.

It was not until late in Eduardo's career that he understood the full benefits of establishing and maintaining networks. However, once he realized the advantages, he made every effort to expand his network whenever possible. Eduardo also described networking as a continuous process that needs to be cultivated at every opportunity, even during informal activities.

Gabriel, the federal agency director, also talked about his early networking experiences as he recalled:

> I went to Washington, D.C. to do my training and got to meet all the power players in D.C. such as the Assistant Secretaries through this fashion. After work, everybody would play softball maybe once or twice per week out on the mall. I have always played soccer so I have been athletically inclined. We played baseball in the mall and afterwards we would go have a beer and talk business.

Gabriel learned quickly about the importance of establishing long lasting relationships outside of the work environment. Developing close contacts during memorable or enjoyable events helped maintain strong bonds in Gabriel's network, helping him later as when he said, "I talked about my background and where I was from and all it took was a phone call from my group in Washington to get me moved back to my home town."

Networking was a valuable tool the participants used to advance their careers. According to Parker (2008), nearly half of all job seekers obtain their jobs through word of mouth and by whom they know. Furthermore, networking allowed the participants in this study to create and maintain professional relationships and gather and distribute information to help climb the professional ladder, which Kiefer (2011) claims are tips for a successful career. Each participant experienced positive outcomes through networking. Even though Carlos considered some aspects of networking less than desirable, such as promotions resulting from social connections

instead of skills, he later realized the value of networks and learned to develop professional relationships as a necessary resource.

Taxonomies

I used the domain analysis to identify areas of focus (domains) the participants demonstrated as important in their journeys to become successful leaders. I then examined the relationships among domains to perform a taxonomic analysis, which is an in-depth study of the ways the domains are organized and the relationships among them (Jacob, 1987). As a result, I discovered certain connections among domains that I used to created three core taxonomies. Furthermore, I concluded that these three taxonomies most closely aligned to the objectives of this research and provided the richest source of information needed to answer the research questions. The three taxonomies I constructed by examining the relationships among the domains were (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships. The full composition of these taxonomies is detailed in this chapter.

Becoming competitive taxonomy. The first taxonomy I constructed through the taxonomic analysis was becoming competitive. I formed this taxonomy by analyzing the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven and applying the strict inclusion semantic relationship X is a kind of Y. I selected these domains for analysis because during the interviews, the participants commented how they (a) encountered barriers during their careers impeding advancement into senior leader positions and (b) used an intrinsic drive to confront and surmount these obstacles. Every participant described a number of hurdles they had to overcome to succeed. However, rather than succumb to these barriers, they strived to compete at the highest levels. An explicit example of this motivation to compete comes from Alex, the military leader:

> I was told that I could never achieve what others could because of who I was and all that did was motivate me to do better because I just wouldn't accept that as a fact. But, some people become convinced with the constant pounding that they are not as good as this person or that person, or this race or that race, and that you are in fact a substandard individual.

Alex's statement described the structural inequities he encountered because of his cultural background and how it motivated him to give his best effort. These statements were included in the encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven domains. The included terms consisted of (a) *I was told that I could never achieve what others could because of who I was* and (b) *all that did was motivate me to do better*. The included terms and domains I used to construct the becoming competitive taxonomy are included in the remainder of this section along with the supporting participant comments. The completed taxonomy is shown in Figure 3.

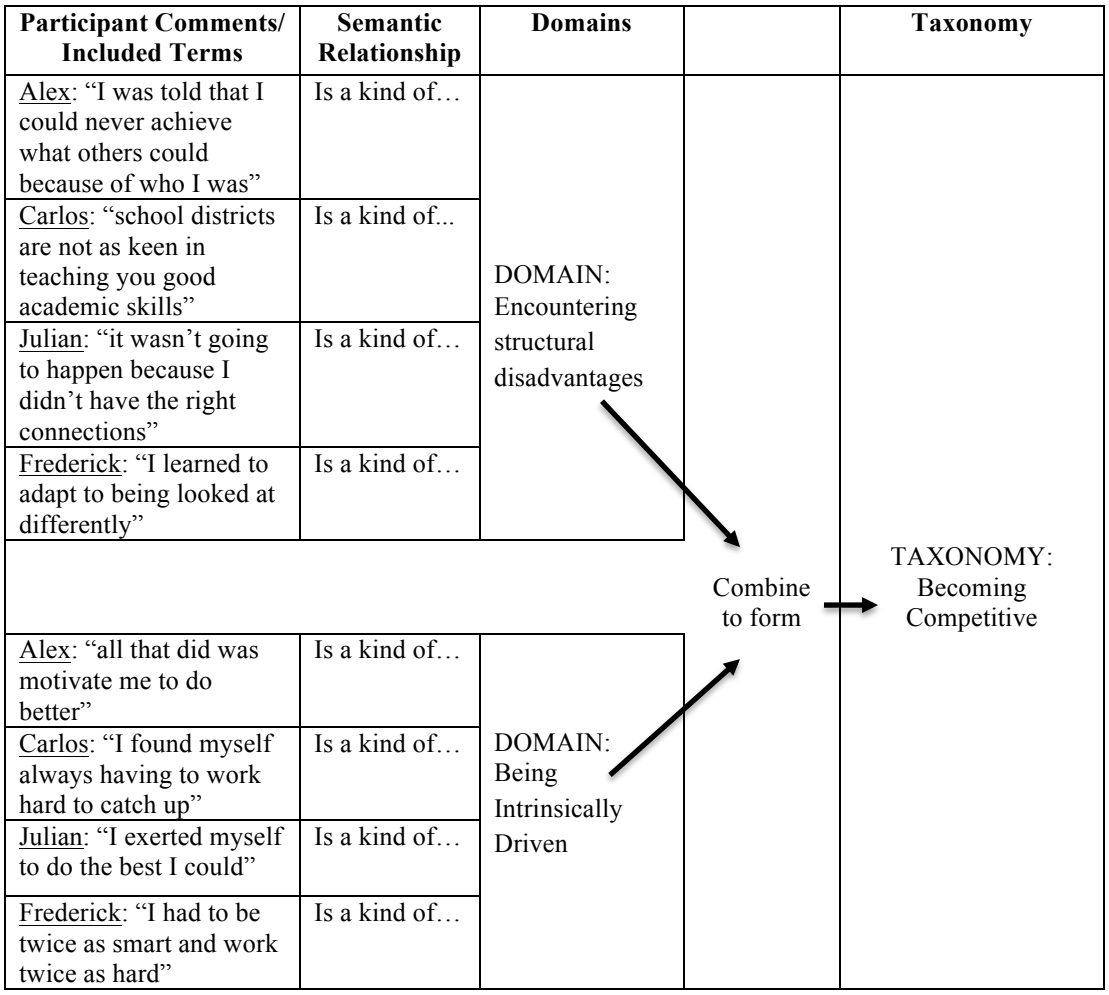

Figure 3. Becoming Competitive taxonomy developed from multiple domains and a single semantic relationship. The figure includes comments from four participants and is read from left-to-right, beginning with the participant comments, semantic relationship, domains, and resulting taxonomy.

Figure 3 illustrates the becoming competitive taxonomy, which was constructed from the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven. The included terms and semantic relationship combine to form the domains and the strict inclusion X is a kind of Y relationship between the domains created the taxonomy.

One of the most illustrative examples of the interrelationship between encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven domains that created the becoming

competitive taxonomy came from Carlos. He understood that he would have to work hard to compete in school in order to overcome his educational disadvantages:

> When you grow up in a border town, the school districts are not as keen in teaching you good academic skills. So, I found myself always having to work hard to catch up. I had to work extra hard because I didn't have the same skills as the White students, particularly the writing and communication skills.

From Carlos' transcript segment, I identified the challenges he faced while attending schools in a U.S./Mexican border town. Even though he found himself academically behind his non-Hispanic peers, he recognized that he had to work harder to keep up with these students. The realization that he needed to improve his skills to remain competitive provided the motivation and drive that pushed him to succeed. As a result, the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven were identified as subsets of the taxonomy becoming competitive. The included terms within the domains consisted of (a) *school districts are not as keen in teaching you good academic skills* and (b) *I found myself always having to work hard to catch up*.

An additional unique perspective came from Julian who was born and raised in Mexico, where he attended both primary and secondary schools. Julian spoke of the obstacles he encountered during his pursuit of higher education opportunities in Mexico. He was not able to gain access to the graduate programs he desired even though he excelled academically at every level. As a result, he applied to schools in the U.S. where he later attended. He said:

> I wanted to get into graduate programs but I realized it wasn't going to happen because I didn't have the right connections. In Mexico back then, only the kids of wealthy families or families with political connections got into graduate school. So, I exerted myself to do the best I could, which opened up opportunities to study in the United States.

Julian spoke of his realization that he would not be able to gain access to graduate programs in Mexico regardless of academic proficiency because of the social structure in that country. Julian also talked about his efforts to excel academically, which opened up opportunities to study

abroad. Therefore, the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven were identified as part of the larger taxonomy of becoming competitive and the supporting included terms were (a) *it wasn't going to happen because I didn't have the right connections* and (b) *I exerted myself to do the best I could*.

Another point of view on becoming competitive comes from Frederick, the Fortune 500 company executive, who discussed his experiences realizing he was viewed differently from his non-Hispanic peers, but allowing his feelings of exclusion to motivate him to work twice as hard. He remarked:

> I learned to adapt to being looked at differently. Okay, I am not like them but I will show them what I got. It was the drive to do better than everyone else. My grandfather told me I had to be twice as smart and work twice as hard as the other person because I was already challenged by my color.

Frederick acknowledged that he was perceived differently from others in his corporate environment and he realized that he had to prove himself in order to be accepted. By following his grandfather's advice to outperform his non-Hispanic peers, he demonstrated that he was just as capable as they were, regardless of his cultural background. Therefore, the domains of encountering structural disadvantages and being intrinsically driven were identified as subsets of the larger, more inclusive taxonomy of becoming competitive and the included terms for the taxonomy from Frederick's interview consisted of (a) *I learned to adapt to being looked at differently* and (b) *I had to be twice as smart and work twice as hard*.

Overall, the participants expressed their experiences with discrimination and showed an awareness that they were looked at differently by their non-Hispanic leaders and peers. For example, comments such as, "I was told I could never achieve what others could because of who I was," "it wasn't going to happen because I didn't have the right connections," "I had to be twice as smart and work twice as hard," and "I learned to adapt to being looked at differently,"

reflected the sense that participants recognized the disadvantages they faced and the actions they took to manage them. These responses indicated participant willingness to meet challenges head on, responding to the study's research question of how the participants in this study were able to successfully overcome barriers during their rise to become senior leaders.

Becoming a leader taxonomy. The second taxonomy I identified from the taxonomic analysis was becoming a leader. I constructed this taxonomy by examining the domains of having role models, capitalizing on opportunities, and knowing how to lead and applying the X is a kind of Y semantic relationship. I selected these domains for analysis because during the interviews the participants revealed how their role models set examples and influenced them to take advantage of opportunities early in their lives. As a result, the participants willingly accepted roles and responsibilities, which developed their skills as leaders and contributed to their many achievements. The included terms and domains used to construct the becoming a leader taxonomy are included in the remainder of this section along with supporting participant comments. The completed taxonomy is presented in Figure 4.

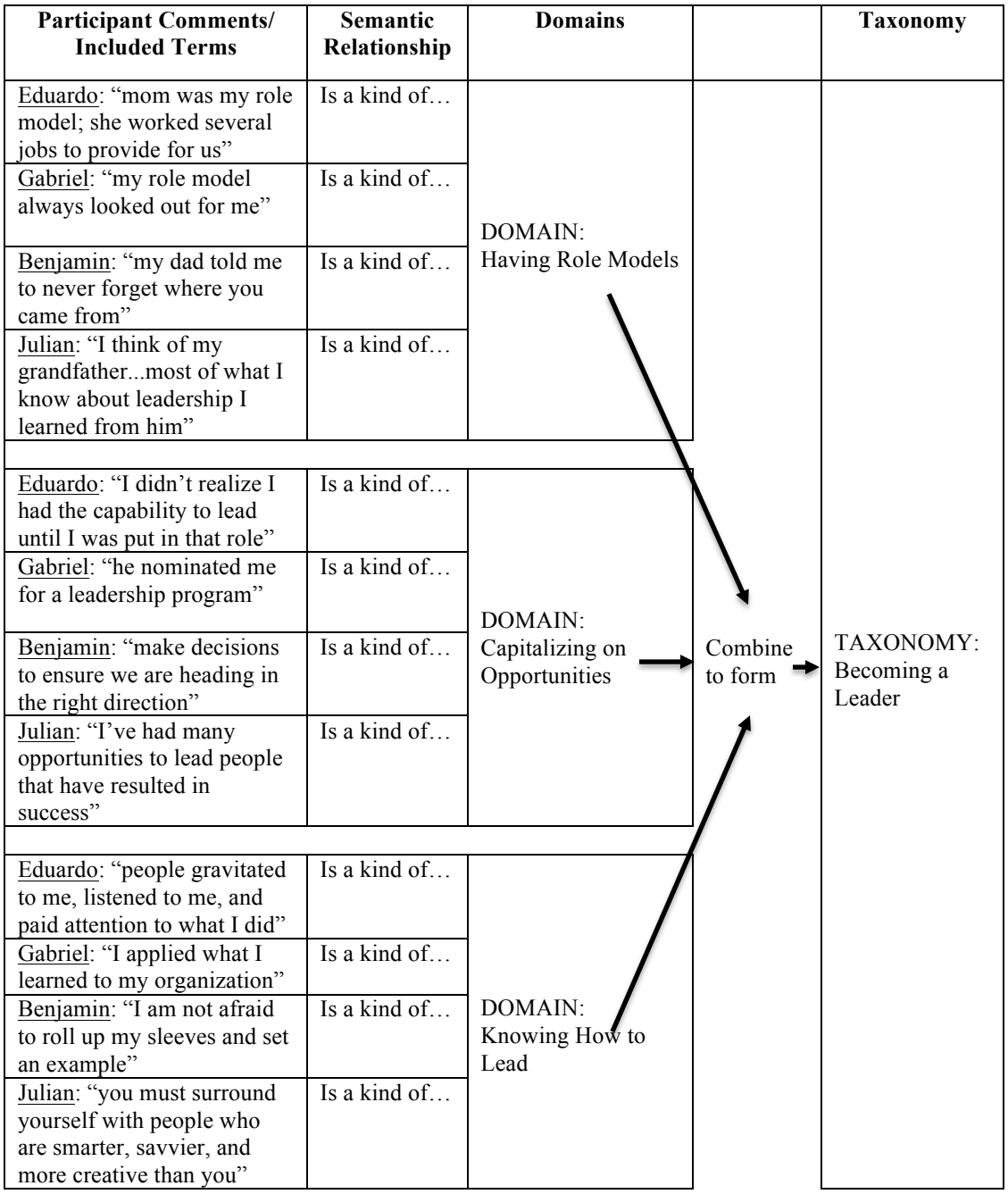

Figure 4. Becoming a Leader *t*axonomy developed from multiple domains and a single semantic relationship. The figure includes comments from four participants and is read from left-to-right, beginning with the participant comments, semantic relationship, domains, and resulting taxonomy.

Figure 4 illustrates the becoming a leader taxonomy created from the domains of having role models, capitalizing on opportunities, and knowing how to lead, along with the supporting

included terms. The included terms and semantic relationship combine to form the domains and the relationship between the domains created the taxonomy.

The talent to lead people was apparent early in the lives of most participants, but in some cases like Eduardo, it took time to develop and draw it out. Eduardo talked about discovering his talent for leading after he enlisted in the military. He stated:

> I joined the Air Force and I didn't realize I had the capability to lead until I was put in that role. My plan going in was to not make any noise, not make any ripples, and just stay in the middle of the pack. However, I later realized that people gravitated to me, listened to me, and paid attention to what I did.

Eduardo initially preferred to get through military training without drawing attention. However, Eduardo's training instructors realized his potential and put him in leadership roles where he learned he had the capability to lead. When asked why he accepted the leadership positions, Eduardo replied that prior to entering the military, he grew up in a single-parent household and "mom was my role model; she worked several jobs to provide for us." He described how his mother had taught him the value of hard work. Eduardo wanted her to be proud of him, which motivated him to excel and try to make a better life for his family. Therefore, the domains of capitalizing on opportunities, knowing how to lead, and having role models were identified as subsets of the larger, more inclusive taxonomy of becoming a leader. The included terms from Eduardo's transcript consisted of (a) *I didn't realize I had the capability to lead until I was put in that role*, (b) *people gravitated to me, listened to me, and paid attention to what I was doing*, and (c) *mom was my role model; she worked several jobs just to provide for us*.

Another example of becoming a leader came from the federal agency director Gabriel who recalled how his supervisor provided him with an opportunity to attend an elite leadership school that helped him become a better leader:

> My role model always looked out for me. He nominated me for a leadership program in D.C. I took away so much from that program. I applied what I learned to my organization and now I advocate a servant leadership style of management. I understand staff and people, and working with people is my passion.

Gabriel commented on how his former role model and mentor realized his potential and nominated him to a highly competitive leadership development program designed for the next generation of senior leaders. Gabriel learned valuable skills from the training that he implemented in his organization and developed the leadership style that he still uses to this day. As a result, the domains of having role models, capitalizing on opportunities, and knowing how to lead became part of the larger taxonomy of becoming a leader. The included terms from Gabriel's interview consisted of (a) *my role model always looked out for me*, (b) *he nominated me for a leadership program*, and (c) *I applied what I learned to my organization*.

Another perspective on becoming a leader came from Benjamin who discussed his willingness to roll up his sleeves and set an example for others when he said:

> As dean, part of my responsibility is to make decisions to ensure we are heading in the right direction. I show my staff that I am not afraid to roll up my sleeves and set an example. I went to a recruiting event and the students told me I was the first dean who has ever come up here. I don't mind getting dirty because I always remember long ago when my dad told me to "never forget where you came from."

Benjamin spoke of his responsibilities to make sure the decisions he makes for his college lead them in a successful direction. He also believes in setting an example for both staff and students alike and remembers the lessons his father taught him about never forgetting the values he learned growing up. Therefore, the domains of capitalizing on opportunities, knowing how to lead, and having role models were identified as subsets of the becoming a leader taxonomy. The included terms identified from Benjamin's interview were (a) *make decisions to ensure we are heading in the right direction*, (b) *I am not afraid to roll up my sleeves and set an example*, and (c) *my dad told me to never forget where you came from*.

A final example supporting the becoming a leader taxonomy came from Julian who discussed his view of being a good leader as when he said:

> I've been blessed in that I've had many opportunities to lead people that have resulted in success. I've learned that to be an effective leader, you must surround yourself with people who are smarter, savvier, and more creative than you. Then you have to empower your people and allow them do what they are charged to do.

When asked what inspired his passion for leadership, Julian reminisced about his grandfather who was the role model that influenced him the most:

> I think of my grandfather in particular whom I was very close to back in that little town in Mexico. In retrospect, when I remember what he used to do; he was a real leader in that little town and probably most of what I know about leadership I learned from him.

Julian believed that investing in smart people pays dividends and he was not afraid to surround himself with high quality employees. He also claimed that a leader's responsibility is to empower employees and allow them the freedom to do their jobs. Julian also shared how his grandfather's influence engrained a foundation for leadership in him at a young age. As a result, the domains of capitalizing on opportunities, knowing how to lead, and having role models were identified as kinds of leadership and became subsets of becoming a leader taxonomy. The included terms for Julian consisted of (a) *I've had many opportunities to lead people that have resulted in success*, (b) *you must surround yourself with people who are smarter, savvier, and more creative than you*, and (c) *I think of my grandfather, most of what I know about leadership I learned from him*.

Through the taxonomic analysis of becoming a leader, I identified how role models influenced participants to take advantage of opportunities to lead and how the participants demonstrated leadership knowledge and abilities. In addition, these leaders displayed an awareness of the importance of taking care of people and the realization that it is one of the most central parts of leadership. For instance, comments such as, "advocate a servant leadership style

of management," "I understand staff and people and working with people is my passion," "show my staff that I am not afraid to roll up my sleeves and set an example," and "surround yourself with smart people and empower them," all display a desire to support and motivate employees. Dubrin (2012) considered attributes such as self-confidence, humility, trustworthiness, and assertiveness important to leadership success. The becoming a leader taxonomy revealed these qualities in the participants and helped address the study's research question of "how did the participants successfully overcome barriers to reach senior leadership positions."

Developing professional relationships taxonomy. The third taxonomy I identified in this study was developing professional relationships. I discovered this taxonomy after analyzing multiple domains and applying the X is a kind of Y semantic relationship. The domains I examined to create the developing professional relationships taxonomy included understanding the importance of mentors and belonging to a network. I chose these domains because they provided examples of how the participants applied advice, direction, and support from mentors to overcome challenges and how they gained access to networks that provided opportunities for them to progress in their careers. This section contains the findings for the domains and semantic relationship that make up the developing professional relationships taxonomy. The included terms and domains used to construct the taxonomy are included in the remainder of this section along with supporting participant comments. The completed taxonomy is presented in Figure 5.

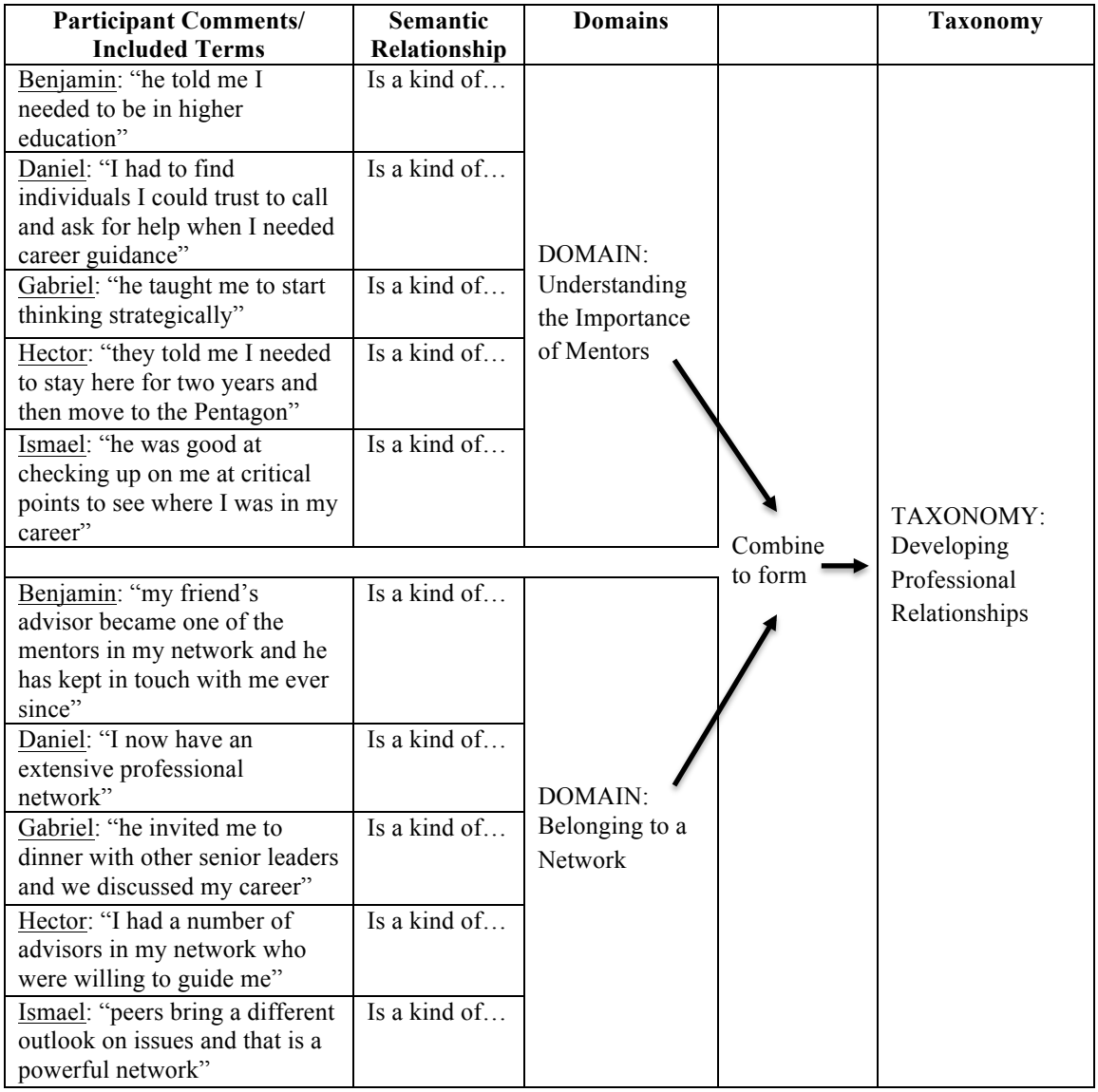

Figure 5. Developing Professional Relationships taxonomy developed from multiple domains and a single semantic relationship. The figure includes comments from five participants and is read from left-to-right, beginning with the participant comments, semantic relationship, domains, and resulting taxonomy.

Figure 5 illustrates the developing professional relationships taxonomy constructed from the domains of understanding the importance of mentors and belonging to a network, along with the supporting included terms. The included terms and semantic relationship combine to form the domains and the relationship between the domains created the taxonomy.

One of the most explicit examples of the concept of developing professional relationships came from Benjamin when he discussed meeting his friend's advisor who later became his own mentor. Benjamin also talked about how his new mentor convinced him to pursue a career in higher education. He said:

> My friend was getting his doctorate at UCLA, and one day I went to California to visit him. While there, he introduced me to his doctoral advisor and right away he told me I needed to be in higher education. He said there are not enough Latinos in the field so I told him I would think about it. My friend's advisor became one of the mentors in my network and he has kept in touch with me ever since.

As a young Hispanic college student contemplating his future, Benjamin did not have anyone in his life to help him plan out the direction of his career until he met his friend's advisor who later became his mentor. The advisor suggested Benjamin pursue the field of education as a career because of the lack of Hispanics in the field. As a result, Benjamin followed his advice and is now a leader in the field of bilingual education. Therefore, the domains of understanding the importance of mentors and belonging to a network were combined to form the taxonomy of developing professional relationships. The included terms from Benjamin's interview were (a) *he told me I needed to be in higher education* and (b) *my friend's advisor became one of the mentors in my network and he has kept in touch with me ever since*.

Another example of the developing professional relationships taxonomy came from corporate executive Daniel who went to a large inner-city high school. Daniel's school did not prepare him well for college and his counselors never encouraged him. Similarly to Benjamin's account of his path, Daniel did not have anyone to help him with career advice and he could not ask his parents for help because they had no experience in a corporate or professional environment. Daniel needed advice during a period in his career when the CEO of his company was going to interview him for a new position. Daniel had never interviewed at this level before

and needed help preparing for the interview, anticipating the CEO's questions, and determining the kinds of questions he should ask, he remarked:

> Because my parents never worked in a white-collar professional environment like I did, I couldn't turn to them for advice. Therefore, I had to find individuals I could trust to call and ask for help when I needed career guidance. I now have an extensive professional network that you wouldn't believe.

Daniel did find a mentor at the firm where he was employed, but it taught him that he could not succeed alone; he needed people he could trust and who had been through similar experiences. As a result, he established an extensive network that he relies on to guide him through career decisions. Thus, from Daniel's comments, the domains of understanding the importance of mentors and belonging to a network were identified as subsets of the developing professional relationships taxonomy and the included terms consisted of (a) *I had to find individuals I could trust to call and ask for help when I needed career guidance* and (b) *I now have an extensive professional network*.

Another point of view on the developing professional relationships taxonomy came from Gabriel who said his mentor must have seen something in him and wanted to help him succeed. He spoke about his experiences with a new mentor:

> Later, one of the instructors pulled me aside. He invited me to dinner with other senior leaders and we discussed my career. I thought wow; this guy was schooled at Harvard and director with the office of management and budget and now he wants to mentor me? He taught me to start thinking strategically and I don't know what he saw in me because you never see it in yourself.

Gabriel believed he was singled out because his instructor saw potential in him. This individual volunteered to mentor Gabriel and along with other leaders, gave him career guidance. Gabriel's comment, "I don't know what he saw in me because you never see it in yourself" suggests that some Hispanics may not realize their full potential unless they develop relationships with mentors who can provide feedback and advice. As a result, the domains of understanding the

importance of mentors and belonging to a network were combined to form the developing professional relationships taxonomy. The included terms from Gabriel's interview included (a) *he taught me to start thinking strategically* and (b) *he invited me to dinner with other senior leaders and we discussed my career*.

Another view on the developing professional relationships taxonomy came from Hector who shared his experiences about a former supervisor who helped him make critical career choices:

> I had a number of advisors in my network who were willing to guide me. They told me I needed to stay here for two years and then move to the Pentagon and that is what I did. Their advice allowed me to further my education, broaden my career experience, and believe in myself.

Even though Hector has an established network willing to provide guidance and support, his experience also demonstrated that a level of mutual trust must exist for a mentoring or networking relationship to be effective. As indicated in the interview excerpt above, Hector trusted his network's advice regarding the length of time to stay at a job and when to relocate. As a result, his trust was rewarded with new educational and career broadening opportunities. Thus, the domains of belonging to a network and understanding the importance of mentors were combined to form the developing professional relationships taxonomy. The included terms for Hector consisted of (a) *I had a number of advisors in my network who were willing to guide me* and (b) *they told me I needed to stay here for two years and then move to the Pentagon*.

A final perspective on the developing professional relationships taxonomy came from Ismael who talked about the mentorship he received from his college vice-president:

> The vice-president at the college where I worked took an interest in me. He was good at checking up on me at critical points to see where I was in my career and he really supported me. Having peers has been helpful as well, particularly if they are not in your organization. Peers bring a different outlook on issues and that is a powerful network by just being able to bounce ideas off them.

Ismael spoke about the guidance and support his mentor provided during important periods of his career. Similar to Gabriel, Ismael's mentor told him he believed in his potential and wanted to develop it further. Ismael also praised the value of his peer network because of the diverse viewpoints they brought to the table and the ability to bounce ideas off them. As a result, the domains of understanding the importance of mentors and belonging to a network were combined to form the developing professional relationships taxonomy. The included terms for Ismael consisted of (a) *he was good at checking up on me at critical points to see where I was in my career* and (b) *peers bring a different outlook on issues and that is a powerful network*.

The participants discussed the importance of developing professional relationships and the ways it contributed to career success and advancement into the senior leadership levels. They also described how mentors and advisors assisted them through network connections, career guidance, and changing the way they thought about themselves and their careers. Hector said: "their advice allowed me to further my education, broaden my career experience, and believe in myself." Gabriel added: "he taught me to start thinking strategically and I don't know what he saw in me because you never see it in yourself." Another important finding from the developing professional relationships taxonomy was that individuals chose to mentor these participants because they perceived something special in them. For example, comments such as, "my friend's advisor became one of the mentors in my network," "he invited me to dinner with other high-ranking leaders to discuss my career," and "the vice-president at the college where I worked took an interest in me and checked up on me during critical points in my life," demonstrate the mentors' willingness to get involved in the participants lives, leading to their ascension into senior leadership positions.

Chapter Summary

This chapter revealed the results of the study's data analysis performed though the use of Spradley's (1979) Development Research Sequence (DRS). DRS allowed me to analyze interview transcripts and use the participants' own words to identify semantic relationships, included terms, domains, and taxonomies. Thus, DRS provided a systematic method for the participants and myself, as the researcher, to construct meaning from the interviews. Through the analyses of semantic relationships and included terms, I identified seven domains relevant to the purpose of the study and research questions: (1) encountering structural disadvantages, (2) having role models, (3) capitalizing on opportunities, (4) being intrinsically driven, (5) knowing how to lead, (6) understanding the importance of mentors, and (7) belonging to a network. I then examined the organization and relationships among the domains, which resulted in the creation of three taxonomies: (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships.

The becoming competitive taxonomy revealed that the participants in this study demonstrated an intrinsic motivation and a drive to compete and succeed. The participant responses also indicated an understanding and acceptance that they started off at a disadvantage because of the environment in which they were raised. However, when confronted by barriers, they used their internal motivation and drive to help meet and successfully overcome those challenges. The becoming a leader taxonomy also provided examples of how role models inspired participants to take advantage of opportunities to lead. Those experiences enhanced participant leadership knowledge and skills, and instilled in them the importance of taking care of people and the influence it has on leader and employee relations. The developing professional relationships taxonomy revealed how mentors and networks helped the participants become

leaders by opening access to new opportunities and teaching them skills and strategies needed to become successful in their professions. The participants gained access to this support through network connections, career guidance, and changing the way they thought about themselves.

In this study, I explored the life experiences of Hispanic male senior leaders. As a result, I identified three taxonomies that provided key insights into participant experiences and captured their perspectives of how they overcame challenges to reach the top-level leadership positions. The findings also helped provide explanations for this dissertation's research questions of what were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions and how they successfully overcame barriers. The study summary, findings, recommendations, and conclusions are discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: Summary, Findings, Recommendations, and Conclusions

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore the perspectives of Hispanic male leaders who successfully reached senior leadership positions. The following research questions guided the study:

1. What were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions?
2. How did the participants successfully overcome barriers?

I sought to acquire a deeper understanding of the participants' perspectives by having them describe the details of their journey to reach senior-level leadership positions, the types of obstacles they encountered during their progression, and how they overcame those challenges. Data analysis indicated the men interviewed for this study experienced many of the barriers identified in the literature and were able to overcome these hurdles by demonstrating (a) competitive spirit that allowed them to persevere despite the difficulties, (b) exemplary leadership qualities that allowed them to hire and support talented employees, and (c) ability to develop professional relationships that provided the support needed for overcoming the barriers and identifying and capitalizing on opportunities. This chapter first contains a summary of the research. The second section is an explication of the findings, which are organized thematically and followed by a discussion of the research questions. The chapter ends with recommendations for organizations and a set of conclusions.

Research Summary

The participants included 10 Hispanic men who became senior leaders. I studied the perspectives of these leaders so that future generations of Hispanics, with aspirations to advance into senior leadership positions, might benefit from those who had already succeeded. This research also provided a better understanding of the lack of representation of Hispanic men in

senior leader positions in the United States. Furthermore, the participants' perspectives enabled me to identify specific skills, abilities, and qualifications Hispanic leaders said were needed to overcome barriers and compete for high-ranking positions.

I selected the underrepresentation of Hispanic men in senior leader positions as my dissertation topic to highlight the following issues: (a) the ethnic minority population in the United States is growing faster than the non-minority population and Hispanics are driving that growth, (b) only a small percentage of Hispanics ascend to senior leadership levels, and (c) the employment demographics of the nation's private and public sectors do not accurately reflect the racial and ethnic makeup of the U.S. workforce (Martin, 2006; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011c). According to experts in workforce diversity, developing leaders representative of the national population is important because ethnic minority leaders can better relate to employees of diverse cultures and experiences than non-minority leaders (Jelinek, 2011; Selvam, 2013; Vissa & Sundar, 2012).

The change in demographics has also led to an increase in buying power of the nation's Hispanic population. According to the Selig Center 2014 Multicultural Economy Report, U.S. Hispanics are an economic force and spend $1.3 trillion per year, which is more than the economies of all but 15 countries in the world (Weeks, 2014). A survey by Newlink Group (2011) revealed that Hispanics account for more disposable personal income than any other ethnic minority group in the United States, and the presence of Hispanic leaders in industry help companies gain access to new markets and positions the U.S. to compete more effectively in a global economy (Llopis, 2011, 2013; Marquis et al., 2008; Roberson & Park, 2004).

Existing research has indicated that many people with high leadership potential encounter structural disadvantages that prevent them from pursuing promising careers (Thomas, 2001).

These barriers originate from both external environments such as discrimination or access to networks and internal sources such as education, inadequate career planning or insufficient skill preparation (Wentling, 2000). However, scholarly literature on successful cases is limited. Therefore, to address the gap in the research, I focused on exploring the experiences of Hispanic male leaders to gain their perspectives and provide a point of reference for other Hispanic men who wish to reach the top-levels of private or public service in the United States.

I used participant interview transcripts to capture the information needed to develop insights into the perspectives of successful Hispanic male leaders. To analyze the data, I used Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence (DRS), which allowed me to describe the meaning of participant perspectives in their own words. I discovered that participant discussions about past experiences provided me with information to help identify barriers that hindered their efforts to reach senior leadership positions and reveal insights into how they overcame those challenges. The findings from the research address the issue of Hispanic male underrepresentation in senior-level leadership positions and the challenges preventing career advancement. I used the knowledge gained from the interviews to develop suggestions for potential changes to organizational policies. These suggestions are included in the study recommendations section of this chapter.

Findings and Interpretations

I begin this section with a discussion of the barriers identified by the participants and how the findings generated by this research align with the social capital theoretical framework and the literature. I then discuss the three key findings related to the following taxonomies:

(a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships. I also address the study's research questions to provide answers to what were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions and how they successfully overcame barriers.

Barriers. The individuals in this study experienced structural inequalities such as growing up in poverty, English as a second language, and discrimination emanating from the cultural environment in which they were raised. Padilla and Perez (2003) described the social stigma associated with a minority culture by a dominant group and how stigmatized individuals cope with structural inequities. The study participants were aware in advance of the structural inequities that existed and stated that early in their careers, they understood that the odds were stacked against them due to their cultural backgrounds. For example, remarks such as, "I learned to adapt to being looked at differently," "I had to be twice as smart and work twice as hard" and "I feel that being Hispanic was one of the things that didn't allow me to move up the ladder as easily as non-Hispanics" indicated the participants' awareness of the challenges they would need to encounter to advance in their careers.

The participants also revealed that they believed they were not treated in the same manner or given the same opportunities as their non-Hispanic peers. In Thomas' (2001) study, he asserted that White leaders are considered for executive-track positions based on perceived potential, while minorities must first prove themselves through performance. Thomas' claim is consistent with the interview comments made by the participants that they believed they had to work harder than their non-Hispanic White peers to advance in their careers. Similarly, Ospina and Foldy (2009) and Hillman, Cannella, and Harris (2002) suggested that employees are less likely to view minorities as leaders and that ethnic minority men had to achieve more than non-Hispanic White male peers to be thought of as equal in ability. The participants in my study

echoed these arguments in the literature when they claimed they had to work harder than non-Hispanic peers to earn respect and reach senior-level leader positions.

Another form of structural inequality that seven of the participants indicated, was that they lacked a mentor earlier in their careers because there was no mechanism in place for young Hispanics to connect to mentors. They pointed out that there were few Hispanic role models in their professions at the time, and the participants lacked trust and confidence in non-Hispanic superiors. In describing the difficulties they had connecting with mentors, Alex, the military leader, commented "it was very difficult for me to find a mentor and I didn't have anyone I could call a mentor until I was fairly old in the service, well beyond anything reasonable." Benjamin, the university dean, added "I was assigned a formal mentor who was not Latino, but I never met with him and it wasn't until I went to go visit my friend's doctoral advisor, who was Latino, that I felt comfortable sharing my experiences." Carlos, the federal agency leader, also said "we did not have any Hispanic mentors in our organization and the programs that were established were not put into practice so I ended up meeting my mentor by chance at a base function."

Thomas (2001) suggested that minorities encounter problems developing mentoring relationships with non-minorities because of cultural differences and negative stereotypes that exist between mentor and mentee's cultural backgrounds. Kay and Gorman (2012) also discovered that minorities are less likely to form developmental relationships with non-Hispanic White mentors and if they do, minorities receive less guidance and support than mentees in same-race relationships. Lastly, according to Carbado and Gulati (2004), another reason ethnic minorities may have minimal access to mentors is because organizations reserve mentoring resources for individuals that mentors feel most comfortable with, which are typically mentees their similar racial and ethnic background. The data suggests these cultural differences

contributed to the challenges the participants faced when trying to establish mentoring relationships.

Connection to social capital theory. Several of these barriers contributed to the study participants' difficulty in gaining access to social capital in the form of network connections as a resource to help them further their professional goals. Mundra et al. (2003) and McGuire (2000) suggested that Hispanics struggle to reach executive levels due to minimal access to the right kinds of social capital at the top levels of organizations. Social connections to professional networks are essential for career success, as evidenced by a Grupo Balmaseda (2014) study, indicating that Hispanic leaders who have prospered formed social and business networks with successful senior-level mentors. Because 7 of the 10 participants in this study were not able to gain access to mentors or professional networks until later in their careers, their entry into senior leadership positions was delayed. Cultural gaps between participants and their non-Hispanic leaders were one of the reasons that contributed to participant difficulty in gaining access to mentors and networks. However, once the participants gained access to positive social capital, as described earlier by Baker and Dutton (2007), they were able to establish professional relationships with mentors and networks. As a result, the participants experienced positive outcomes from access to forms of social capital that were used to further their careers.

By analyzing the interview data and creating taxonomies, I developed three major findings: First, the participants consistently described ways in which they developed a competitive attitude, which allowed them to overcome some of the early obstacles in life that rose from structural inequalities and their lack of social capital. Second, the participants spoke about developing leadership qualities, which allowed them to effectively apply social capital

once they gained it. Third, the participants discussed their understanding of the need to proactively develop a network of mentors in order to develop social capital in the first place.

Finding #1: Develop a competitive attitude. I identified the first finding from the becoming competitive taxonomy: individuals need to develop a competitive attitude to help them reach senior leader positions. The theme of being competitive and trying to be better than those around them to succeed was repeated across seven individuals. The participants in this study exhibited an innate drive to be the best and used their competitiveness to successfully overcome barriers and reach the senior-levels of their respective organizations. Participants were dedicated and tenacious when confronting obstacles rather than giving up or just getting by. The participants commented how the challenges motivated them to work harder and take responsibility for their own career progression, which is the strategy that Wyche (2009) asserted is needed to reach the top leadership levels. Furthermore, similar to Kilian, Hukai, and McCarty's (2005) research, the participants in my study provided information indicating that personal experiences, such as discrimination in the business and public sector, shaped and inspired them to overcome adversity.

The intrinsically driven mindset to perform at their best, regardless of the task was formed in the participants at an early age. These leaders did not have to be pushed to perform at their best. Many of these individuals had struggled in school to compete with non-Hispanic students so they developed an attitude that they would not fail because they were already at a disadvantage in life. In describing his struggles attending school in a border town, Carlos, the federal service leader, said, "I found myself always having to catch up. I had to work extra hard because I didn't have the same skills as the non-Hispanic White students, particularly in writing and communication." Alex, the military leader added, "I learned I had to do whatever it took in

terms of education and detailed competencies to show that when the time came I was capable of performing." Therefore, the primary focus of these leaders was to prove that they were just as qualified and deserving of opportunities as their non-Hispanic peers. The participants' viewpoint is supported by Chin's (2013) study that reflected that Latino leaders believe they have to prove themselves as leaders more often compared to their non-Hispanic White colleagues.

Finding #2: Develop leadership skills and accept responsibility. I identified the second finding from the becoming a leader taxonomy: individuals need to demonstrate a willingness to accept leadership responsibilities to help them reach senior leadership positions. The participants in this study learned to lead by capitalizing on leadership opportunities as they became available. The participants said they accepted leader roles in part due to their internal drive, but mostly because of the influence from role models and mentors who instilled values and principles that guided them throughout life. The participants also discussed lessons they learned about the importance of capitalizing on opportunities. They realized that by taking advantage of the opportunities they were given to lead people and resources, they were able to improve their skills as leaders, which helped them advance in their careers. Comments such as, "I didn't realize I had the capability to lead until I was put in that role" and "my role model nominated me for a leadership program" reflect the leadership opportunities provided to the participants. Although the participants in this study were given opportunities to prove their leadership abilities, the literature revealed that not all minorities get that chance. Research by Festekjian, Tram, Murray, Sy, and Huynh (2014) revealed that race has a negative consequence on ethnic minority leadership advancement, which limits the number of available opportunities for Hispanics.

The participants in this study demonstrated exceptional leadership capabilities and an awareness that valuing and supporting employees is essential to a successful organization. Of the

10 participants, 5 had some type of formal leadership training, either through military service or other government educational institution such as “Air War College,” the “Industrial College of the Armed Forces,” or the “Excellence in Government Fellows” program. The remaining five participants developed leadership proficiency through postgraduate education, job experience, and training. Regardless of how each participant developed his ability to inspire and motivate people, I found that all individuals excelled at leading organizations to successful outcomes.

The participants unanimously remarked that the key to their achievements was a direct result of the quality of the people in their organization. Comments such as, “hire people better than you,” “do well by people, take care of them and they will take care of you,” and “ you must surround yourself with people who are smarter, savvier, and more creative than you” all reflect the significance each leader placed on appreciating employee contributions. It was unclear why each participant shared a similar leadership style, but research by Okozi et al. (2009) suggested that cultural background influences leadership style and ethnic minorities have a tendency to adopt a nurturing, inclusive, dynamic, engaging, and inspiring leadership style, which would explain the focus on employee well-being. In addition, a study by Ferdman and Cortes (1992) revealed that Hispanic leaders place an emphasis on attention to employees, interpersonal relationships, and importance of attending to the feelings of others in the workplace.

Finding #3: Establish a network of mentors. I identified the third finding from the developing professional relationships taxonomy: individuals need to establish a network of mentors and advisors to help them reach senior leader positions. The participants in this study highlighted two key aspects surrounding their experiences with building professional relationships: (1) they could not have advanced into the higher leadership levels without help from mentors and networks and (2) they did not have access to mentors until later in their

careers. Each participant received guidance and support from his personal and professional networks when advancing into a senior-level leader position. Whether the assistance came from mentors, supervisors, or network associates, the participants discussed how they gained valuable insight to help them successfully overcome the challenges they encountered.

The participants also explained that the advice they received from professional connections was more than general information; it was specific, clear, and realistic. Participant comments such as, “my advisor told me I needed to be in higher education,” “he taught me to start thinking strategically, and “they told me I needed to stay here for two years, and then move to the Pentagon,” reflect concrete recommendations by mentors and networks to implement actions for improvement. The participants indicated that this mentorship allowed them to develop depth and breadth in their respective professions, enabling them to qualify for higher-level jobs. As described by Knouse (1992), mentors can provide several unique functions for Hispanic mentees such as building confidence through training, guidance, and coaching, as well as introducing mentees to social networks and helping them fit into their organizations.

Finally, even though each participant required mentoring to reach senior leadership positions, 7 of the 10 did not establish a mentoring relationship until late in their careers. These seven individuals regretted not establishing professional relationships sooner because without guidance, they struggled and had to experience difficult lessons on their own. The data revealed that three of participants actively sought out mentors, while the other seven individuals let their relationships with mentors develop organically. As discussed in the barriers section, the seven individuals who did not identify a mentor until later in their careers said the primary reason was a lack of a mechanism for them to connect to other Hispanic and non-Hispanic mentors.

Answering the Research Questions

This study was guided by two research questions: what were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions and how did the participants successfully overcome barriers? From the first question, I sought to understand the detailed accounts of the participants' journeys, rising from humble beginnings to later becoming senior-level leaders in their respective professions. With the second question, I wanted to understand how the participants, who faced numerous challenges were able to overcome those obstacles to become senior leaders. To answer each research question, I examined the results of the domain and taxonomic analyses, which contained the common themes and key ideas from the participants' perspectives of their experiences. In this section, I discuss how the participants described the various parts of their journey and the methods they used to successfully overcome the difficulties they encountered.

Research question 1: What were the participants' journeys to reach senior leadership positions? Of the 10 participants in this study, 8 of them described how they and their families grew up in low socioeconomic status areas, spoke Spanish as their primary language, and had close familial ties. On the other hand, every participant exhibited a strong desire to succeed and possessed a relentless self-determination. They also had a strong work ethic, pursued higher education, and displayed leadership capabilities, which enabled them to develop successful careers. The ability to inspire, influence, and motivate people allowed the participants to demonstrate their talent, enhance their reputation, and rise to the top levels of their professions. In each case, the participants identified specific experiences in their lives that motivated them to work hard and compete for top leadership positions in their organizations.

Another part of their journey relevant to the research that participants described during the interviews were the difficulties encountered establishing professional relationships. Each

participant overcame barriers and achieved some measure of success but they required assistance in order to reach senior leadership. The leaders received that assistance in the form of mentors and networks. However, as mentioned previously, the majority of the participants did not connect with a mentor until late in their careers so they had to experience hard lessons on their own. As suggested by Mundra et al. (2003) and Knouse (1992), lack of access to mentoring and social network resources among Hispanics continues to be a persistent problem due to the availability of mentors, language and acculturation issues, and sensitivity to Hispanic culture and values. Nevertheless, learning how to develop professional contacts is an issue that Hispanic men must address before they can fully integrate into higher level social and professional networks.

Research question 2: How did the participants successfully overcome barriers? The participants in this study had strong support from role models and family members who encouraged and motivated them to work hard to overcome challenges and realize their potential. Those role models strongly influenced the important decisions made by the participants which ultimately led to success, such as enrolling in higher education, pursuing career development opportunities, and focusing on English language proficiency. The participants also strived to make their role models and family members proud of their accomplishments. This close attachment and respect of family members is a cultural value among Latinos in the United States (Chin, 2013). Saenz and Ponjuan (2009) refer to this concept as *familismo*, which is defined as the strong bonds of loyalty, responsibility, and respect in the immediate and extended families within the Hispanic culture. It was apparent that the participants in this study relied on the principles of *familismo* to provide the social, emotional, and financial support they needed throughout life to get ahead.

Another experience that molded the participants' life perspectives and will to succeed was exposure to structural inequalities. These individuals understood that many of the disadvantages they faced resulted from their cultural background, yet despite these challenges, the participants in this study prevailed at the highest levels. The participants used the inequitable treatment they encountered as motivation to strive harder and prove they were just as capable as non-Hispanics. Similar to the study participants, Chavez (2011) described the experiences of Hispanic lawyers with discrimination and how they redirected their frustration and anger into the energy needed to challenge those inequities and achieve success. Villegas-Gold and Yoo (2014) refer to the mechanism that minorities use to deal with discriminatory behavior as *engagement coping*. Ethnic minorities will use engagement coping to actively manage the stressful situations of discrimination and create strategies to deal with racist events, which is exactly what the participants in this study were able to do when they refocused their frustration into positive actions (Villegas-Gold & Yoo, 2014).

Recommendations

As a result of this research I recommend the following five approaches to increase the number of Hispanics in senior leadership: (1) emphasize higher education, (2) establish mentorship programs, (3) instill the value of networking, (4) educate Hispanics about potential barriers, and (5) develop executive training programs.

Recommendation 1: Emphasize higher education. Higher education must be emphasized to Hispanics early in life to encourage them to complete high school and pursue a college degree. Since the 1970s, the Hispanic high school dropout rate has been consistently the worst of all demographic groups (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Even though it has decreased significantly to 12% in 2013, it is still well above the African American rate of 7% and

the non-Hispanic White high school dropout rate of 5% (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). At the collegiate level, only 16% of Hispanics 25-years and older are college graduates, compared to 24% of African Americans and 35% of non-Hispanic Whites (U.S. Department of Labor, 2011b). Furthermore, Hispanics earned only 7% of the nearly 612,000 master's degrees awarded during the academic years 2009-2010, while non-Hispanic Whites received 73% of the total during that same period (U.S. Department of Education, 2012). Some approaches have been established to encourage Hispanics to pursue educational opportunities such as: (a) the Parent Institute for Quality Education Program to target Hispanic parent involvement in their children's education; (b) the Hispanics Inspiring Students Performance and Achievement Program to bring Hispanic role models into primary and secondary schools; and (c) the National Education Association's Recruitment and Retention of Educators Program to increase the number of ethnic minority teachers (Chrispeels & Rivero, 2001; Independent Press, 2012; NEA and Teacher Recruitment, n.d.). However, the current Hispanic high school and college graduation trends reveal that Hispanics still have much improvement to make in educational attainment levels in order to compete with non-Hispanics for senior-level leadership jobs.

Recommendation 2: Establish mentorship programs. Hispanics must learn how to identify mentors much sooner in their careers. This should be accomplished by establishing mentoring programs for Hispanics and other ethnic minorities at the high school or college level. First-year Hispanic students can be assigned to upper-class mentors of any race to teach them basic mentoring roles, familiarize them with the mentoring process, and expose them to cross-race mentoring practices. By creating a mentoring program for first-year Hispanic students during high school or college, they will (a) develop an understanding of the importance of mentoring, (b) have an opportunity to become mentors themselves when they become

upperclassmen, (c) be prepared to seek and become mentors when they enter the workforce. Programs should also be established in organizations to mentor Hispanics and other minorities as they enter the workplace as interns. Mentoring programs are already in place in many establishments, but as some of the participants in this study have pointed out, many programs are not enforced and lack top-level leadership involvement. Furthermore, because participants in this study did not connect with mentors until late in their career, they encountered problems that could have been avoided with proper mentorship. Therefore, mentoring programs must be supported from the top down to ensure senior leadership involvement at every level. Finally, mentoring programs must be developed with the realization that diverse cultures communicate differently and interactions between racial and ethnic groups will become more prevalent. As organizations develop a greater number of Hispanic leaders with mentoring experience, these individuals will be able to share that knowledge with future Hispanic leaders to help them understand the impact of effective mentoring on career development.

Recommendation 3: Instill the value of networking. The value of networking in a professional environment must be instilled in Hispanics. The Hispanic culture conducts networking on a social basis as evidenced by the concept of *familismo* (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). Through *familismo*, Hispanics maintain strong relationships with immediate and extended family members, which is a form of networking, but *familismo* bonds are primarily focused within the family unit and not beyond immediate social structures (Saenz & Ponjuan, 2009). The Hispanic leaders in this study learned the value of networking and this point was captured most effectively by Benjamin's comment: "If my mentors can't help me, they will contact the group of experts I need and inform them that I will be getting in touch with them." In order for Hispanics to develop this type of understanding about the benefits derived from networking, programs must

be established to educate them. Similar to the recommendation for mentoring programs, networking programs should be established at the high school or college levels to familiarize Hispanics and other ethnic minorities with the networking process. According to Parker (2008), "managing a career starts the moment undergraduate studies begin" (p. 53) so creating opportunities to develop networking skills prior to entering the workforce will help prepare Hispanics and other minorities for future leadership roles.

Recommendation 4: Educate Hispanics about potential barriers. Hispanics need to be educated and prepared for the potential challenges they may face throughout their careers. The participants in this study faced many obstacles, from growing up in poverty and English language challenges, to lack of mentoring opportunities and discrimination. However, these leaders had to learn how to confront challenges without guidance to help them avoid the hazards they encountered. As one of the participants recalled, "I had to learn some tough lessons, I mean, tough lessons. I didn't know there was help out there. I thought I had to do everything on my own because that is the way I always did things." Rather than allow aspiring Hispanic leaders to struggle through similar difficulties, programs should be established to encourage current Hispanic senior leaders to share their experiences with future leaders in both the private and public sectors. These top officials could describe (a) the types of challenges they encountered, (b) the factors that contributed to the barriers, and (c) how they overcame them. These programs could be introduced as early as high school and should be included in college career service programs and organizational internship positions. By continuing to research the structural and cultural mechanisms that lead to these barriers, viable solutions can be developed.

Recommendation 5: Develop executive training programs. My final recommendation is to develop organizational training programs to teach executives how to identify ethnic

minority leader potentials early in their careers. Research statistics revealed low percentages of Hispanics in the nation's senior leader positions, comprising approximately 4% of corporate executives, 3% of senior federal leaders, 2% of the top military ranks, and 3% in academia (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 2012). As Thomas (2001) asserted, many minorities with leadership potential are not identified early in their careers when they should be placed on senior leadership paths. Therefore, an organizational training program should be developed to help executives look beyond the cultural background of aspiring leaders and focus strictly on future leadership potential, which the Korn Ferry Institute (2015) report describes as cognitive, leadership and interpersonal skills, as well as learning ability, motivation, and determination.

These educational and training programs could also focus on cultural competency and diversity awareness to promote an equitable and respectful work environment. Incorporating this mindset into corporate culture from the top down will establish organizational sensitivity and enable ethnic minorities to gain access to the career development opportunities they need to develop skills for senior leadership positions. Similar programs are already in existence and have proven successful. For example, in a survey of over 1,600 companies, Kaiser Permanente has been named to Diversity Inc.'s Top 10 list 7 years in a row and their Burch Minority Leadership Development Program has demonstrated their commitment to diversity and has helped produce a number of emerging ethnic minority leaders (Diversity Inc., 2015).

Future Studies

Due to limited time and resources, the scope of this study focused on capturing the participants' perspectives from their experiences in only a specified number of categories. The remainder of this section suggests areas that were not addressed during the study that should be

considered for future research. These topics include (a) the importance of education, (b) generational differences, and (c) attribution theory approach.

Importance of education. One topic that should be studied further is the connection between educational achievement and career success for Hispanic males. The participants in this study all possessed advanced degrees but during the interviews, they commented that educational attainment was not a primary factor in their ascension to senior leader status. They stated that as they moved up higher in the organization, the more important criteria became leadership abilities and connections to influential networks. The primary discussion surrounding the topic of education with the participants was related to the fact that their role models, who were mostly family members, encouraged them to go to school to provide future opportunities. Although Singh (2007) asserted that education was a key factor that enabled ethnic minorities to move past barriers and gain access to upper-level positions, more research is required on the types and levels of degrees that would most benefit aspiring Hispanic leaders. Future research is also needed to identify reasons behind the gap in ethnic minority educational attainment, especially for Hispanics. Regardless whether the causes of academic disparities for Hispanics are social, economic, or political, lack of education is an important obstacle to professional advancement and until the problem can be studied further, Hispanic males will continue to struggle for senior leadership jobs (Newlink Group, 2011).

Generational differences. Another area I did not address in this study and should be researched further is the impact of generational differences to determine if acculturation plays a role in the success of Hispanic leaders. The participants in this study came from different Hispanic generations that had settled in the United States. Five of the participants were second generation, meaning they were born in the U.S. and their parents were born in Mexico. Four

participants were third generation in that both they and their parents had been born in the U.S. Only one participant was first generation who born in Mexico and later became a naturalized U.S. citizen. Although a study by the Pew Research Center (2004) identified only minor differences between second and third generation Hispanics, it did reveal that third generation are more English dominant than second generation, which may have contributed to the language difficulties several of these participants experienced. Perez and Padilla (2000) also found that within a few generations, many Hispanics begin to display a predominant American culture orientation, while maintaining only traces of their Hispanic culture. This data suggests that as Hispanic generations assimilate into American society, greater numbers will have the capability to reach senior leader status.

Application of attribution theory lens. A third topic that should be considered for a future study is the use of an attribution theory lens to Hispanic males who were not able to reach the senior leader levels. There are many different branches of attribution theory, but according to Jones and Nisbet (1971), at its core attribution theory looks at the different ways people explain particular outcomes and how they "attribute," or explain outcomes or behaviors. For example, while people may attribute successes or failures to fate, circumstance, or personal innate characteristics, research has also shown that people vary their attributions based on whether they are explaining outcomes for themselves or for others, the "actor/observer" bias (Jones & Nisbet, 1971). Based on these definitions, an attribution theory perspective could be applied to examine the social psychological influences of ethnic minority leader perception of events, rather than an explanatory method to determine how minorities are able to reach the senior leadership levels.

The Hispanic males in this study explained their successes in terms that suggested the outcomes were not pre-determined; they described their paths to success in terms of hard work,

internal motivation, and ultimately active behavior on their part such as working to extend their networks. However, most narratives also contained elements that were outside their control, largely that the values allowing them to develop the internal characteristics needed for success were developed from role model influence, work opportunities, and serendipitous professional relationships. An attribution theory perspective from participants in lower and middle-management positions, who were not able to achieve senior leadership status, could further explain the perspectives of Hispanic males and roadblocks they encounter in career progression.

Summary and Conclusions

This qualitative interpretive study explored the perspectives of Hispanic men to help gain an understanding of how they successfully overcame barriers to reach the top leadership levels. The theoretical framework proposed that limited access to social capital prevents Hispanics from gaining entry into senior leadership positions. However, the accumulation of social capital from the participants in this study enabled them to gain entry into the social networks that provided them with opportunities for leadership roles. The literature demonstrated that Hispanics are now the largest ethnic minority group in the United States, but are underrepresented in top executive positions. Hispanics also face a number of challenges to these high-level leadership jobs. The obstacles range from discrimination to lack of mentors, opportunities, and access to influential people; yet, the 10 participants in this study achieved success in spite of the difficulties. Ethnic minorities must learn how to overcome these hurdles to compete for leadership-track assignments and developmental opportunities. More importantly, organizations must integrate diversity into every aspect of their culture, and barriers for ethnic minority leaders must be addressed before true equality and integration into senior leadership can begin.

The findings revealed these Hispanic leaders from four different professions followed a similar path to become senior leaders and they all shared the following common experiences:

- Raised in economically challenging environments
- Part of strong family units that provided guidance and support
- Highly competitive and attempted to be the best at what they did
- Were taught the importance of education and strong work ethic early in life
- Exposed to discrimination or other barriers that motivated them to try harder
- Unable to connect to mentors until later in career
- Not familiar with the benefits of networking until later in career
- Provided with leadership opportunities where they thrived
- Valued employee contributions and expressed concern with their well-being

While these common factors are not a recipe for success, they validated that Hispanic males do have the potential to compete with the established majority groups in the United States and reach the top leadership levels. The participants in this study were not able to control the structural disadvantages that impacted their lives, such as socioeconomic status, living environments, and discrimination. However, by managing the internal factors they did control such as drive, education, leadership, mentoring, and networking, they were able to meet challenges head on and thrive. By bringing this topic to light, I attempted to identify the types of factors that are manageable to allow other aspiring Hispanic leaders to follow a career path similar to these participants if they so desire.

The use of Spradley's (1979) Developmental Research Sequence enabled me to identify three key taxonomies that contributed to the success of the participants in this study: (a) becoming competitive, (b) becoming a leader, and (c) developing professional relationships. Through this research, I learned that becoming competitive is much more than just trying to win. It encompasses establishing goals, overcoming adversity, and improving human capital in order to compete for the top jobs. Secondly, becoming a leader is more than just managing and directing people. It includes accepting leadership roles when given the opportunity, continuous

development of personal leadership skills, and valuing, supporting, and caring for employees. Third, developing professional relationships is more than compiling an impressive list of people in one's network or using connections with others to achieve success. It is building quality relationships with influential people, demonstrating individual skills and abilities to engage mentor support, and learning to embrace cultural differences with potential mentors.

The participants in this study demonstrated that Hispanic men are able to reach the senior leadership levels, but as the statistics in the literature indicated, their numbers are underrepresented. In the next 30 to 40 years, the Hispanic population is projected to increase to over 30% of the total U.S. population. It is essential that the numbers of Hispanic leaders increase to correspond with these demographic changes for two important reasons: (1) as U.S. businesses expand globally, they will need diverse leaders who can understand and relate to various cultures and (2) with the increasing purchasing power of Hispanics, corporations will need Hispanic leaders to create effective strategies to capture this growing market. Without a multicultural approach to commerce, the United States will lose their competitive edge in the global economy, which could have a detrimental impact on both the nation's workforce and standard of living. Furthermore, to compete for emerging international markets, future U.S. leaders will need to understand, respect, and relate to various cultures and communicate that sense of comfort to both employees and clients. However, looking beyond dollars and cents, breaking down the barriers to diversity at the top leadership levels in the United States is the "right thing to do" and the next step in true equality for all Americans.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Participant Invitation Letter

Greetings Mr. XXXX,

My name is Esequiel (Zeke) Mora and I am currently a doctoral student working on a Ph.D. in Education with a concentration in organizational leadership at the University of the Incarnate Word, San Antonio, Texas. I have been working on this goal over the past 4 years and have completed all academic courses, qualifying examinations, proposal defense, and other requirements. The last step for completion of the degree is to write and defend a dissertation; thus, I am hoping to conduct a 60-minute face-to-face interview with you as part of the research.

I decided to conduct a qualitative research dissertation because I want to explore the career experiences of Hispanic male leaders. More specifically, I want to look at the underrepresentation of Hispanic males in senior-level leadership positions. As you may already be aware of, Hispanics are the fastest growing ethnic group in the country and will become approximately one-third of the total U.S. population before 2050. What has not changed is the Hispanic presence in top leadership positions in both the private and public sectors. My research has revealed that Hispanic representation in most top-level jobs averages approximately three to four percent.

These statistics have motivated me to interview Hispanic males such as yourself who have reached senior leader status to find out how you were able to overcome barriers to advance to your current position. I am hoping to develop lessons learned from your experiences that other aspiring Hispanic male leaders can refer to should they decide to follow your career path. Of course, all data gathered during the interviews will be private and confidential which will discussed and agreed upon should you decide to participate. My plan is to conduct approximately 10 interviews from 4 different industries (business, education, government, and the military) to allow cross-case analyses among diverse professions. Upon completion of my degree, I am hoping to perhaps teach or find other ways to help Hispanics overcome barriers to success. I have completed the first three chapters of my dissertation and can send you excerpts if you are interested.

Please let me know if you would be able to participate in this study. My contact information is below.

Thank you.
Respectfully,
Zeke Mora (xxx) xxx-xxxx
Email: xxxx

Appendix B

Subject Consent to Take Part in a Study Form

Overcoming the Odds to Successfully Reach Senior Management Positions: Experiences of Hispanic Male Leaders

University of the Incarnate Word

I am Zeke Mora, a graduate student at the University of the Incarnate Word working towards a doctorate degree in education with a concentration in organizational leadership.

You are being asked to participate in a research study about the underrepresentation of Hispanic males in senior-level leadership positions by taking part in an interview at a time and place that is convenient and comfortable for you.

I seek to analyze the perspectives of Hispanic male leaders to learn how they were able to overcome successfully any barriers they faced to reach the senior levels of their respective organizations. Current literature reveals that Hispanics represent only 3% to 4% of top-level leadership positions in the U.S. This is contradictory to the fact that Hispanics are one of the fastest growing population groups in the United States. Hispanics now comprise nearly 17% of the population, but by the year 2050, will represent over 30% of the total U.S. population. By studying the perspectives of successful leaders, the research has the potential to (a) aid prospective Hispanic leaders with the selection of a proper path toward senior leader positions and (b) help organizations provide better support for promising Hispanic leaders.

You are being asked to take part in this study because of your current or former position as a senior-level organizational leader. Since the focus of the study is to capture the perspectives of Hispanic male leaders who have reached senior leadership positions, your contributions will be extremely valuable to the outcome of this research.

If you decide to participate, I will conduct a face-to-face interview with you. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes and will focus on your experiences and pathway to becoming a senior leader. The interviews will be recorded in order to facilitate analyses of the information you provide. Everything I learn about you will be kept confidential and the recorded data from the interview will be deleted once it is transcribed. I will use pseudonyms and will not include identifying information in the data such as names, emails, or phone numbers. All data will be stored securely and the results will be used solely for the purposes of this study. If I publish the results of the study, you or your organization will not be identified in any way.

Your decision to take part in this study is voluntary. You are free to choose not to take part in the study or to stop taking part at any time. If you choose not to participate in the study, it will not have an effect on professional organizational membership or future affiliations with this program or with the University of the Incarnate Word.

There are no incentives or compensation for participating in this study, nor do I guarantee that you will directly benefit from taking part in this research. I hope the information gained during this study can be used to provide lessons learned and a potential roadmap for other aspiring Hispanic males who wish to follow a similar career path.

If you have questions now, please feel free to ask. If you have additional questions later or you wish to report a problem that may be related to this study, you may contact either me or my dissertation chair.

The University of the Incarnate Word committee that reviews research on human subjects, the Institutional Review Board, will answer any questions about your rights as a research subject (Dean of Graduate Studies and Research).

You will be given a copy of this letter to keep.

YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES THAT YOU (1) CONSENT TO TAKE PART IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY, (2) THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION GIVEN ABOVE, AND (3) THAT THE INFORMATION ABOVE WAS EXPLAINED TO YOU.

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Printed Name of Participant

_____

Date

Appendix C

Participant Interview Questions

Overcoming the Odds to Successfully Reach Senior Management Positions: Experiences of Hispanic Male Leaders

Following is a list of potential interview questions for the study of "Overcoming the Odds to Successfully Reach Senior Management Positions: Experiences of Hispanic Male Leaders." The interview questions are organized by topic and include possible probing and follow-up questions. The sequence of questions will depend upon the participants' responses.

- Tell me about your journey to reach your current position
    - Tell me about your experiences growing up
    - What events inspired you to pursue your current career path?
- Tell me about your job and what is involved in your role as _____
    - Describe a typical day for you
- Tell me about some of the people who have influenced your career path and how they contributed to your success
- Tell me about some of the barriers you had to face during your journey to this position
    - How did you overcome these barriers?
    - How should aspiring Hispanic leaders address these barriers?
    - What do you think needs to be changed to address these barriers?
- Tell me about your peer network and people with whom you interact
    - How important were these connections to your success?
    - How did you gain access to your network?
    - What would you say to other aspiring Hispanic leaders about networking?
- What are some of the lessons you would like to share with others who would like to follow a similar career path?
- If I had a Hispanic male friend who is aspiring to follow your career path:
    - What would he need to know?
    - What would he need to do?
- What else would you like to add that we have not talked about?